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ALEC FORBES OF HOWGLEN.

BY

GEORGE MAC DONALD M.A.

AUTHOR OF

“DAVID ELGINBROD,” “ADELA CATHCART,”  
&c. &c.

\* \* \* \* a faith sincere  
Drawn from the wisdom that begins with fear.  
WORDSWORTH.—*Second Evening Voluntary.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:  
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,  
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,  
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1865.

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LONDON:

PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL, BLENHEIM HOUSE,  
BLENHEIM STREET, OXFORD STREET.

# ALEC FORBES OF HOWGLEN.

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## CHAPTER I.

IT was on a bright frosty evening in the end of October, that Alec entered once more the streets of the great city. The stars were brilliant over head, the gems in Orion's baldric shining oriently, and the plough glittering with frost in the cold blue fields of the northern sky. Below, the streets shone with their own dim stars ; and men and women wove the web of their life amongst them as they had done for old centuries, forgetting those who had gone before, and careless of those who were to come after.

The moment he had succeeded in satisfying his landlady's inquisition, he rushed up to Mr. Cupples's room. Mr. Cupples was out. What was Alec to do ? He could not call on Mr. Fraser that night ; and all space between him and Kate growing more

immeasurable the nearer he came to her, he could not rest for the feeling of distance. So he wandered out, and along the sea shore till under the wall of the pier. The tide was low, and the wall high over his head. He followed it to the edge of the water, and gazed out over the dim lead-coloured sea. While he stood thus, he thought he heard voices in the air, and looking up, saw, far over him, on the top of the wall, two heads standing out against the clear sky, one in a bonnet, the other in a Glengarry. Why should he feel a pang in his heart? Surely there were many girls who took star-light walks on that refuge in the sea. And a Glengarry was no uncommon wear for the youths of the city. He laughed at his own weak fancies, turned his back on the pier, and walked along the shore towards the mouth of the other river which flowed into the same bay. As he went, he glanced back towards the top of the wall, and saw the outline of the man. He was in full Highland dress. The woman he could not see, for she was on the further side of her companion. By the time he was halfway to the college, he had almost forgotten them.

It was a desolate shore along which he walked. Two miles of sand lay by the lip of the sea on his right. On his left rose irregular and changeful mounds of dry sand, upon which grew coarse grass

and a few unpleasant-looking plants. From the level of the tops of these mounds stretched away a broad expanse of flat uncultivated ground, covered with thin grass. This space had been devoted, from time immemorial, to the sports of the city, but at this season, and especially at this hour, it was void as the Sahara. After sauntering along for half an hour, now listening to the wind that blew over the sand-hills, and now watching the spiky sparkle of the wintry stars in the sea, he reached a point whence he could descry the windows of Mr. Fraser's part of the college. There was no light in Kate's window. She must be in the dining-room with her uncle—or—or—on the pier—with whom? He flung himself on the sand. All the old despair of the night of thunder, of the moonlight ramble, of the last walk together, revived. He dug with his fingers into the sand; and just so the horrible pain was digging, like a live creature with claws, into his heart. But Kate was indeed sitting quietly with her uncle, while he lay there on the sea-shore.

Time passes quickly in any torment—merciful provision. Suddenly something cold seemed to grasp him by the feet. He started and rose. Like a wild beast in the night, the tide had crept up upon him. A horror seized him, as if the ocean were indeed a slimy monster that sought to devour

him where he lay alone and wretched. He sprang up the sand before him, and, sliding back at every step, gained the top with difficulty, and ran across the *links* towards the city. The exercise pumped the blood more rapidly through his brain, and before he reached home hope had begun to dawn. He ascended the garret-stairs, and again knocked at Mr. Cupples's door.

"Come in," reached his ear in a strange dull tone. Mr. Cupples had shouted into his empty tumbler while just going to swallow the last few drops without the usual intervention of the wine-glass. Alec hesitated, but the voice came again with its usual ring, tinged with irritation, and he entered.

"Hillo, bantam!" exclaimed Mr. Cupples, holding out a grimy hand, that many a lady might have been pleased to possess and keep clean and white: "Hoo's the soo? And hoo's a' the cocks and hens?"

"Brawly," returned Alec. "Hoo's the *tappit hen*?"—a large bottle, holding six quarts, in which Mr. Cupples kept his whisky.

Mr. Cupples opened his eyes wide, and stared at Alec, who saw that he had made a blunder.

"I'll hae nae jaw frae you, younker," said he slowly. "Gin ye be sae ill at ease 'at ye maun tak' leebeerties for the sake o' bein' facetious, ye can jist gang doon the stair wi' a quaiet sough."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Cupples," said Alec earnestly, for he was vexed with himself. "But ye're quite richt; I am some ill at ease."

"I thocht as muckle. Is the rainbow beginnin' to cast (*fade*) a wee? Has the fit o' Iris ca'd a hole i' the airch o' 't? Eh, man! man! Tak' to the mathemawtics and the anawtomy, and fling the conic sections an' the banes i' the face o' the bonny jaud—Iris, I mean, man, no ither, lass or leddy."

For Mr. Cupples had feared, from the expression of Alec's face, that he had given him offence in return. A silence of a few seconds followed, which Alec gladly broke.

"Are you still acting as librarian, Mr. Cupples?" he said.

"Ay. I'm actin' *as* librarian," returned Cupples dryly. "And I'm thinkin'," he added, "that the buiks are beginnin' to ken by this time what they're aboot; for sic a throuther disjaskit midden o' lere, I never saw. Ye micht hae taicklet it wi' a graip" (*a three-pronged fork*, a sort of agricultural trident). "Are ye gaun to tak' the cheemistry alang wi' the naiteral philoasophy?"

"Ay."

"Weel, ye jist come to mè, as ye hae dune afore. I'm no sae gude at thae things as I am at the Greek; but I ken mair already nor ye'll ken whan

ye ken a' 'at ye will ken. And that's nae flattery either to you or me, man."

With beating heart, Alec knocked the next day at Mr. Fraser's door, and was shown into the drawing-room, where sat Kate alone. The moment he saw her, he knew that there was a gulf between them as wide as the Glamour in a spate. She received him kindly, nor was there anything in her manner or speech by which he could define an alteration; and yet, with that marvellous power of self-defence, that instinctive knowledge of spirituo-military engineering with which maidens are gifted, she had set up such a palisade between them, dug such a fosse, and raised such a rampart, that without knowing how the effect was produced, he felt that he could not approach her. It is strange how women can put out an invisible arm and push one off to an infinite removal.

With a miserable sense of cold exhaustion and aching disappointment, he left her. She shook hands with him warmly, was very sorry her uncle was out, and asked him whether he would not call again to-morrow, when he would certainly be at home? He thanked her in a voice that seemed to him not his own, while her voice appeared to him to come out of some far-off cave of the past. The cold frosty air received him as he stepped from the door, and its breath was friendly. If



the winter would only freeze him to one of its icicles, and still that heart of his which would go on throbbing although there was no reason for it to throb any more! Yet had he not often found her different from what he had expected? And might not this be only one of her many changeful moods? Perhaps.

So feeling that he had nothing to do and only one thing to think about, he wandered further through the old burgh, past the lingering fragment of its once mighty cathedral, and down to the bridge which, with its one Gothic arch as old as the youth of Chaucer, spanned the channel, here deep and narrow, of the long-drawn Highland river. Beyond it lay wintry woods, clear-lined against the pale blue sky. Into these he wandered, and was going on, seeing nothing, thinking nothing, almost feeling nothing, when he heard a voice behind him.

"Hillo, bantam!" it cried; and Alec did not need to turn to know who called.

"I saw ye come oot o' Professor Fraser's," said Cupples, "and I thocht a bit dauner i' the caller air wad do me no ill; sae I jist cam' efter ye."

Then changing his tone, he added,

"Alec, man, haud a grip o' yersel'. Dinna tyne that. Lowse onything afore ye lowse haud o' yersel'."

“What do you mean, Mr. Cupples?” asked Alec, not altogether willing to understand him.

“Ye ken weel eneuch what I mean. There’s a trouble upo’ ye. I’m no speirin’ ony questons. But jist haud a grip o’ yersel’. Rainbows! Rainbows!—We’ll jist hae a walk thegither, an’ I’ll instruct ye i’ the first prenciples o’ naiteral philosophy.—First, ye see, there’s the attraction o’ graivitation, and syne there’s the attraction o’ cohesion, and syne there’s the attraction o’ adhesion; though I’m thinkin’, i’ the lang run, they’ll be a’ fun’ to be ane and the same. And syne there’s the attraction o’ affeenity, whilk differs mair nor a tae’s length frae the lave. In hit, ye see, ae thing taks till anither for a whilie, and hauds gey and sicker till ’t, till anither comes ’at it likes better, whaurupon there’s a proceedin’ i’ the Chancery o’ Natur—only it disna aye haud lang, and there’s nae lawyers’ fees—and the tane’s straughtways divorced frae the tither.”

And so he went on, giving a kind of humorous travesty of a lecture on physics, which, Alec could not help perceiving, glanced every now and then at his mental condition, especially when it came to treat of the mechanical powers. It was evident that the strange being had some perception of the real condition of Alec’s feelings. After walking a couple of miles into the open country, they re-

traced their footsteps. As they approached the college, Mr. Cupples said :

“Noo, Alec, ye maun gang hame to yer denner. I’ll be hame afore nicht. And gin ye like, ye can come wi’ me to the library the morn, and I’ll gie ye something to do.”

Glad of anything to occupy his thoughts, Alec went to the library the next day ; and as Mr. Cupples was making a catalogue, and at the same time a thorough change in the arrangement of the books—both to be after his own heart—he found plenty for him to do.

Alec soon found his part in the catalogue-work becoming agreeable. But although there was much to be done as well in mending old covers, mounting worn title-pages, and such like, in this department Mr. Cupples would accept no assistance. Indeed if Alec ventured to take up a book destined for repair, he would dart at him an anxious, almost angry glance, and keep watching him at uneasy intervals till he had laid it down again. Books were Mr. Cupples’s gold and jewels and furniture and fine clothes, in fact his whole *gloria mundi*.

But the opening day was at hand, after which Alec would have less time. Still he resolved, as some small return for the kindness of Mr. Cupples, that he would continue to give him what help he

could ; for he had discovered that the pro-librarian lived in continual dread lest the office should be permanently filled before he had completed his labour of re-organization.

During the few days passed in the library, he called once upon Mr. Fraser, and met with a warm reception from him. Kate gave him a kind one as before ; but he had neither the satisfaction nor the pain of being alone with her.

At the opening, appeared amongst the rest Patrick Beauchamp—claiming now the name and dignity of The Mac Chattachan, for his grandfather was dead, and he was heir to the property. He was, if possible, more haughty than before ; but students are not, as a class, ready to respond to claims of superiority upon such grounds as he possessed, and, except by a few who were naturally obsequious, he continued to be called Beauchamp, and by that name I shall call him too.

It soon came out that when lecture-hours were over, he put off his lowland dress, and went everywhere in Highland costume. Indeed on the first day, Alec met him in the gloaming thus attired ; and the flash of his cairngorms as he passed seemed to scorch his eyes, for he thought of the two on the pier, and the miserable hour that followed. Beauchamp no longer attended the anatomical

lectures ; and when Alec observed his absence, he recalled the fact that Kate could never bear even a distant reference to that branch of study. Whether he would have gone in for it with any heartiness himself this session, had it not been for the good influence of Mr. Cupples, is more than doubtful. But he gave him constant aid, consisting in part of a liberal use of any kind of mental goad that came to his hand—sometimes praise, sometimes rebuke, sometimes humorous execration.

Fortunately for the designs of Beauchamp, Mr. Fraser had been visiting in his mother's neighbourhood ; and nothing was easier for one who, like most Celts, possessed more than the ordinary power of ingratiating, than to make himself agreeable to the old man. When he took his leave to return to the college, Mr. Fraser declared himself sorry that he had made no better acquaintance with him before, and begged that he would call upon him when he came up.

## CHAPTER II.

SOON after the commencement of the session, a panic seized the townspeople in consequence of certain reports connected with the school of anatomy, which stood by itself in a low neighbourhood. They were to the effect that great indignities were practised upon the remains of the *subjects*, that they were huddled into holes about the place, and so heedlessly, that dogs might be seen tearing portions from the earth. What truth there may have been at the root of these reports, I cannot tell; but it is probable they arose from some culpable carelessness of the servants. At all events, they were believed in the neighbourhood, occupied by those inhabitants of the city readiest to receive and dwell upon anything revolting. But what pushed the indignation beyond the extreme of popular endurance, was a second rumour, in the consternation occasioned by which the whole city shared: the *resurrectionists* were at their foul

work, and the graveyard, the place of repose, was itself no longer a sanctuary! Whether the authorities of the medical school had not been guilty of indifference, contenting themselves with asking no questions about the source whence the means of prosecuting their art was derived, may be a question. But fear altogether outstripped investigation, and those even who professed unbelief, took precautions; whence the lights of the watchers of the dead might be seen twinkling, far into the morning, in the solemn places around the city churches; while many a poor creature who would have sold his wife's body for five pounds, was ready to tear a medical student to pieces on the mere chance that his scalpel had touched a human form stolen from the sacred enclosure.

Now whether Beauchamp, who had watched Alec in the same situation before, had anything to do with what follows, I cannot tell; but his conduct then lays him open to suspicion now.

Alec, who found some escape if not relief from painful thought in the prosecution of his favourite study, was thus occupied one evening, no very unfrequent occurrence, by candle-light. He had almost reached a final understanding of the point in pursuit, when he was roused from his absorption by a yell outside. He had for some time previous heard a sound of gathering commotion but had



paid no attention to it. He started up from his stooping posture, and having blown out his candle, perceived, by the lamps outside, that a crowd of faces, pale in the darkness, was staring through the high iron palisade which surrounded the school. They had seen his light, and were now watching for his coming out. He knew that upon the smallest additional excitement the locked gates and palisade would not keep them off more than half a minute ; so he instantly barred the shutters, and betook himself to the porter's room. As he crossed the small open corner between the two doors, he heard the *sough* of their angry speech swelling and falling like a wind in the upper regions of the night ; but they did not see him. Fortunately, there was a side door in the railing, seldom used, of which the key hung in the porter's room. By this door Alec let himself out, and re-locked it. But the moment he turned to go home, he heard an urchin, who had peeped round a corner, screech to the crowd across the enclosure :

“ He 's oot at the back yett ! He 's oot at the back yett and awa' ! ”

Another yell arose, and the sounds of trampling feet.

Alec knew that his only chance lay in his heels, and took to them faithfully. Behind him came the crowd in hot pursuit. The narrow streets



rang with their shouts of execration. Such curses could hardly be heard elsewhere in Europe. Alec, knowing most of the courts and passages, doubled on his pursuers in the hope of eluding them. But discovering that he had his instrument still in his hand, he stopped to put it down the bars of a grating, for a cut from it would have been most perilous, as he had been using it a day too soon; and before he had gained another turning, his pursuers were on his track and had caught sight of him. But Alec's wind and muscles were both good; and in five minutes more he was at the back entrance to his own lodging, having left the mob far behind him. He darted up to Mr. Cupples, and as soon as he found breath enough, told him his adventure, saying with a laugh, as he concluded,

"It's a mercy there's as muckle o' me to the fore as can tell the tale!"

"Jist tak' ye tent, bantam," returned Mr. Cupples, who had suddenly assumed a listening attitude, with his head on one side, "or ye mayna tell the neist. Hark!"

From far below arose the dull sound of many feet on the stone-stairs. Mr. Cupples listened for a moment as if fascinated, then turning quietly in his chair, put the poker in the fire. Alec rose.

"Sit down, you fool!" cried Cupples; and Alec obeyed.

By this time the mob was thundering at the door of the flat below. And the fact that they knew where Alec lived adds to my suspicion of Beauchamp. The landlady wisely let them in, and for a few minutes they were busy searching the rooms. Then the noise of their feet was heard on the wooden stair leading up to the garret, whereupon Mr. Cupples turned the poker in the fire, and said to Alec,

“Rin into that hole there, direckly.”

He pointed with the red-hot poker to the door already mentioned as partly sunk in the slope of the ceiling, and then stuck the poker in the fire again. . Alec pulled the door open, and entering closed it behind him. The next moment, guided by the light from under it, the foremost footsteps reached the door, and the same instant Mr. Cupples appeared in it with his glowing weapon in his hand. Faces with flashing eyes filled the dark garret outside.

“What do ye want?” asked Mr. Cupples.

“We want a resurrectioner ’at bides i’ this hoose—a foul bane-pikin’ doctor,” answered a huge, black-faced smith.

“What do ye want wi’ *him*?”

“What are *ye* stan’in’ jawin’ there for? Haud oot o’ the gait. Gin he bena in your box, what’s the odds o’ oor luikin’ in ’t?”

“Haud a quaiet sough, my man,” answered Cupples, raising the point of the worn old weapon, the fervency of whose whiteness had already dimmed to a dull scaly red, “or I s’ lat ye ken ’at I’m i’ my ain hoose. My certy! but this’ll gang throu ye as gin ye war sae mony kegs o’ saut butter!”

And he gave a flourish with his rapier—the crowd yielding a step before it—as he asked once more—

“What do ye want wi’ him?”

“To ca the sowl oot o’ the wame o’ the deil’s buckie o’ him,” said a limping ostler.

“Is’ pang the mou’ o’ him wi’ the hip o’ a corp,” cried a pale-faced painter, who seemed himself to belong to the injured fraternity of corpses.

A volley of answers too horrible for record, both in themselves and in the strange devilry of their garnish of oaths, followed. Mr. Cupples did not flinch a step from his post. But, alas! his fiery sword had by this time darkened into an iron poker, and the might of its enchantment vanished as the blackness usurped its glow. He was just going to throw it away, and was stretching out his other hand for his grandfather’s broadsword, which he had put in the corner by the door ready to replace it, when a long arm, with a fist at the end of it, darted from between the heads in front of him, hurled him across

the room, and laid him bleeding and senseless on his own hearth. The poker flew from his hand as he fell. The crowd rushed in after him, upset his table, broke open the door that protected his precious books, and with one vigorous kick from the blacksmith's apprentice, sent in the door of Alec's retreat. But at that moment Alec was contemplating the crowd below from a regal seat between two red chimney-pots.

For as soon as he had drawn to the door of the closet, instead of finding darkness, he became aware of moonshine, coming through a door that led out upon the roof. This he managed to open, and found himself free of the first floor of the habitable earth, the cat-walk of the world. As steady in foot and brain as any sailor, he scrambled up the roof, seated himself as I have said, and gave himself up to the situation. A sort of stubby underwood of chimney-pots grew all about him out of red and blue ridges. Above him the stars shone dim in the light of the moon, which cast opal tints all around her on the white clouds; and beneath him was a terrible dark abyss, full of raging men, dimly lighted with lamps. Cavernous clefts yawned in all directions, in the sides of which lived men and women and children. What a seething of human emotions was down there! Would they ever be sublimed out of that torture-

pit into the pure air of the still heaven, in which the moon rode like the very throne of peace?

Alec had gone through enough of trouble already to be able to feel some such passing sympathy for the dwellers in the city below. But the sounds of search in the closet recalled him to a sense of his position. If his pursuers looked out at the door, they would see him at once. He was creeping round to the other side of the chimney to cower in its shadow, when a sudden bellow from the street apprised him that the movement had discovered him to the crowd. Presently stones came flying about the chimneys, and a busy little demon bounded into the house to tell the ring-leaders that he was on the roof. He therefore slid down the slope away from the street, and passed on to the roof of the next house, and thence to the third.

Arriving at a dingy dormer window, he found that it opened with ease, admitting him into a little room crowded with dusty books and cobwebs. He knew then that he was in the territorial outskirts of a certain second-hand bookseller, with whom he had occasional dealings. He closed the window, and sat down upon a pile of neglected volumes. The moon shining through the clouded window revealed rows of books all about him, of which he could not read even the names. But

he was in no want of the interest they might have afforded him. His thoughts turned to Kate. She always behaved to him so that he felt both hurt and repelled, and found it impossible to go to her so often as he would. Yet now when seated in the solitude of this refuge, his thoughts went back to her tenderly; for to her they always returned like birds to their tree, from all the regions whither the energetic dispersion of Mr. Cupples might have scattered them for their pickings of intellectual crumbs. Now, however, it was but as to a leafless wintry tree, instead of a nest bowered in green leaves. Yet he was surprised to find that he was not ten times more miserable; the fact being that, as he had no reason to fear that she preferred any one else, there was plenty of moorland space left for Hope to grow upon. And Alec's was one of those natures that sow Hope everywhere. All that such need is room to sow. Take that away and they are desperate. Alec did not know what advantage Beauchamp had been taking of the Professor's invitation to visit him.

After a time the tumult in the street gradually died away, and Alec thought he might venture to return to Mr. Cupples. Clambering back over the roofs, he entered, and found the inner door of the closet broken from its hinges.



As he moved it aside, a cry of startled fear discovered that his landlady was in the room.

“Guid preserve ’s, Mr. Forbes!” she cried; “whaur come ye frae, and what hae ye been about, to raise the haill toon upo’ ye? I trust ye hae nae legs or airms o’ a cauld corp about ye. The fowk i’ the back streets canna bide that. An’ I winna alloo ’t i’ my hoose. Jist luik at puir Mr. Cupples here.”

Mr. Cupples lay on the bed, with his head bound in a bloody bandage. He had fallen upon the fender, and a bad cut had been the consequence. He held out his hand to Alec, and said feebly,

“Bantam, I thocht ye had had yer neck thrawn or this time. Hoo, the muckle deil! did ye win oot o’ their grips?”

“By playin’ the cat a wee,” answered Alec.

“It ’s the first time,” remarked Mr. Cupples, “I ever kent I had a door to the lift(*sky*). But faith! the sowl o’ me was nearhan’ gaein’ out at this new ane i’ my ain riggin. Gin it hadna been for the guidwife here, ’at cam’ up, efter the clanjamfrie had taen themsel’s aff, an’ fand me lying upo’ the hearthstane, I wad hae been deid or noo. Was my heid aneath the grate, guidwife?”

“Na, nae freely that, Mr. Cupples; but the blude o’ ’t was. And ye maun jist haud yer

tongue, and lie still. Mr. Forbes, ye maun jist come doon wi' me ; for he winna haud 's tongue 's lang 's ye 're there. I'll jist mak' a cup o' tay till him."

"Tay, gudewife! Deil slocken himsel' wi' yer tay! Gie me a sook o' the tappit hen."

"'Deed, Mr. Cupples, ye s' hae neither sook nor sipple o' that spring."

"Ye rigwiddie carlin!" grinned the patient.

"Gin ye dinna haud yer tongue, I'll gang for the doctor."

"I'll fling him doon the stair.—Here's doctor eneuch!" he added, looking at Alec. "Gie me half a glaiss, nate."

"Never a glaiss nor glaiss sall ye hae frae my han', Mr. Cupples. It wad be the deid-o' ye. And forbye, thae ill-faured gutter-partans (*kennel-crabs*) toomed the pig afore they gaed. And guid faith! it was the only wise-like thing they did. Fess the twa halves o' 't, Mr. Forbes, an' lat him see 't wi' the een o' misbelief."

"Gang oot o' my chaumer wi' yer havers," cried Mr. Cupples, "and lea' me wi' Alec Forbes. He winna deave me wi' his clash."

"'Deed, I'll no lea' twa sic fules thegither. Come doon the stair direckly, Mr. Forbes."

Alec saw that it was better to obey. He went up on the sly in the course of the evening, however,



but, peeping in and seeing that he slept, came down again. He insisted upon sitting up with him though, to which, after repeated vows of prudence and caution, their landlady consented.

He was restless and feverish during the night. Alec gave him some water. He drank it eagerly. A flash of his humour broke through the cloud of his suffering as he returned the tumbler.

“Eh, man! that ’s gran’ tippie,” he said. “Hoo do ye ca’ ’t?”

In the morning he was better; but quite unable to rise. The poor fellow had very little blood for ordinary organic purposes, and the loss of any was a serious matter to him.

“I canna lift my heid, Alec,” he said. “Gin that thrawn wife wad hae but gien me a drappy o’ whusky, I wad hae been a’ richt.”

“Jist lie ye still, Mr. Cupples,” said Alec. “I winna gang to the class the day. I’ll bide wi’ you.”

“Ye ’ll do nae sic thing. What’s to come o’ the buiks forby, wantin’ you or me to luik efter them? An’ the senawtus ’ll be sayin’ that I got my heid clured wi’ fa’in’ agen the curbstane.”

“I’ll tell them a’ aboot it, ane efter anither o’ them.”

“Ay; jist do sae. Tell them a’ aboot it. It wad brak my hert to pairt wi’ the buiks afore

I got them pitten in dacent order. Faith ! I wadna lie still i' my coffin. I wad be thrawin' and turnin', and curfufflin' a' my win'in' sheet, sae that I wadna be respectable whan I bude to get up again. Sae ye maunna lat them think that I'm ower drucken for the buiks to keep company wi', ye ken."

Alec promised to do all he could to keep such a false conclusion from entering the minds of the senatus, and, satisfied that he would best serve the interests of Mr. Cupples by doing so at once, set off for college, to call on the professors before lectures.

The moment he was out of the room, Mr. Cupples got out of bed, and crawled to the cupboard. To his mortification, however, he found that what his landlady had said was in the main true ; for the rascals had not left a spoonful either in the bottle which he used as a decanter, or in the store-bottle called the *tappit* (*crested*) *hen* by way of pre-eminence. He drained the few drops which had gathered from the sides of the latter, for it was not in two halves as she had represented, and crawled back to bed. A fresh access of fever was the consequence of the exertion. It was many days before he was able to rise.

After the morning-classes were over, Alec went to tell Mr. Fraser, the only professor whom he had

not already seen, about his adventure, and the consequences of the librarian's generous interference.

"I was uneasy about you, Mr. Forbes," said the professor, "for I heard from your friend Beauchamp that you had got into a row with the blackguards, but he did not know how you had come off."

His friend Beauchamp! How did he know about it? And when could he have told Mr. Fraser?—But Kate entered, and Alec forgot Beauchamp. She hesitated, but advanced and held out her hand. Alec took it, but felt it tremble in his with a backward motion as of reluctance, and he knew that another thickness of the parting veil had fallen between her and him.

"Will you stay and take tea with us?" asked the professor. "You never come to see us now."

Alec stammered out an unintelligible excuse.

"Your friend Beauchamp will be here," continued Mr. Fraser.

"I fear Mr. Beauchamp is no friend of mine," said Alec.

"Why do you think that? He speaks very kindly of you—always."

Alec made no reply. Ugly things were vaguely showing themselves through a fog.

Kate left the room.

"You had better stay," said the old man kindly.

"I was up all night with Mr. Cupples," answered Alec, longing to be alone that he might think things out, "and I am anxious about him. I should be quite uneasy if I did stay—thank you, Mr. Fraser."

"Ah! well; your excuse is a good one," answered the old man. And they parted.

Alec went home with such a raging jealousy in his heart, that he almost forgot Mr. Cupples, and scarcely cared how he might find him. For this was the first time he had heard of any acquaintance between the professor and Beauchamp. And why should Kate hesitate to shake hands with him? He recalled how her hand had trembled and fluttered on his arm when he spoke of the red stain on the water; and how she had declined to shake hands with him when he told her that he had come from the dissecting-room. And the conviction seized him that Beauchamp had been working on her morbid sensitiveness to his disadvantage—taking his revenge on him, by making the girl whom he worshipped shrink from him with irrepressible loathing.

And in the lulls of his rage and jealousy, he had some glimpses into Kate's character. Not that he was capable of thinking about it; but flashes of reality came once and again across the

vapours of passion. He saw too that her nerves came, as it were, nearer the surface than those of other people, and that thence she was exposed to those sudden changes of feeling which had so often bewildered him. And now that delicate creature was in the hands of Beauchamp—a selfish and vulgar-minded fellow! That he whom he had heard insult a dead woman, and whom he had chastised for it, should dare to touch Kate! His very touch was defilement. But what could he do? Alas! he could only hate. And what was that, if Kate should love! But she could not love him already. He would tell her what kind of a person he was. But she would not believe him, and would set it down to jealousy. And it would be mean to tell her. Was Kate then to be left to such a fate without a word of warning? He *would* tell her, and let her despise him.—And so the storm raged all the way home. His only comfort lay in saying over and over again that Kate could not be in love with him yet.

But if he had seen Kate, that same evening, looking up into Beauchamp's face with a beauty in her own such as he had never beheld there, a beauty more than her face could hold, and overflowing in light from her eyes, he would have found this poor reed of comfort break in his hand and pierce his heart. Nor could all his hatred

have blinded him to the fact that Beauchamp looked splendid—his pale face, with its fine, regular, clear-cut features, reflecting the glow of hers, and his Highland dress setting off to full advantage his breadth of shoulders and commanding height. Kate had at last found one to whom she could look up, in whom she could trust!

He had taken her by storm, and yet not without well-laid schemes. For instance, having discovered her admiration of Byron, instead of setting himself, like Alec, to make himself acquainted with that poet, by which he could have gained no advantage over her, he made himself her pupil, and listened to everything she had to say about Byron as to a new revelation. But, at the same time, he began to study Shelley; and, in a few days, was able to introduce, with sufficient application, one or two passages gathered from his pages. Now, to a mind like that of Kate, with a strong leaning to the fantastic and strange, there was that in Shelley which quite overcrowded Byron. She listened with breathless wonder and the feeling that now at last she had found a poet just to her mind, who could raise visions of a wilder beauty than had ever crossed the horizon of her imagination. And the fountain whence she drank the charmed water of this delight was the lips of that grand youth, all nobleness and devotion. And how wide his reading must



be, seeing he knew a writer so well, of whom she had scarcely heard!

Shelley enabled Beauchamp to make the same discovery, with regard to Kate's peculiar constitution, on the verge of which Alec had lingered so long. For upon one occasion, when he quoted a few lines from the Sensitive Plant—if ever there was a Sensitive Plant in the human garden, it was Kate—she turned “white with the whiteness of what is dead,” shuddered, and breathed as if in the sensible presence of something disgusting. And the cunning Celt perceived in this emotion not merely an indication of what he must avoid, but a means as well of injuring him whose rival he had become for the sake of injury. Both to uncle and niece he had always spoken of Alec in a familiar and friendly manner; and now, he would occasionally drop a word or two with reference to him and break off with a laugh.

“What *do* you mean, Mr. Beauchamp?” said Kate on one of these occasions.

“I was only thinking how Forbes would enjoy some lines I found in Shelley yesterday.”

“What are they?”

“Ah, I must not repeat them to you. You would turn pale again, and it would kill me to see your white face.”

Whereupon Kate pressed the question no

further, and an additional feeling of discomfort associated itself with the name of Alec Forbes.



## CHAPTER III.

I HAVE said that Mrs. Forbes brought Annie home with her. For several months she lay in her own little room at Howglen. Mrs. Forbes was dreadfully anxious about her, often fearing much that her son's heroism had only prolonged the process—that she was dying notwithstanding from the effects of that awful night. At length on a morning in February, the first wave of the feebly returning flow of the life-tide visited her heart, and she opened her eyes, seekingly. Through her little window, at which in summer she knew that the honeysuckle leaned in as if peeping and hearkening, she saw the country wrapt in a winding-sheet of snow, through which patches of bright green had begun to dawn, just as her life had begun to show its returning bloom above the wan waves of death.—Sickness is just a fight between life and death.—A thrill of gladness, too pleasant to be borne without tears, made her close her eyes.

They throbbed and ached beneath their lids, and the hot tears ran down her cheeks. It was not gladness for this reason or for that, but the essential gladness of being that made her weep: there lay the world, white and green; and here lay she faint and alive. And nothing was wanting to the gladness and kindness of Mrs. Forbes but the indescribable aroma of motherhood, which she was not divine-woman enough to generate, save towards the offspring of her own body; and that Annie did not miss much, because all knowledge she had of such "heavenly health" was associated with the memory of her father.

As the spring advanced, her strength increased, till she became able to move about the house again. Nothing was said of her return to the Bruces, who were not more desirous of having her than Mrs. Forbes was of parting with her. But if there had ever been any danger of Alec's falling in love with Annie, there was much more now. For as her health returned, it became evident that a change had passed upon her. She had always been a womanly child; now she was a childlike woman. Her eyes had grown deeper, and the outlines of her form more graceful; and a flush as of sunrise dawned oftener over the white roses of her cheeks. She had ripened under the snow of her sickness. She had not grown much, and

was rather under than over the ordinary height; but her shape produced the impression of tallness, and suggested no probability of further growth. When first Thomas Crann saw her after her illness, he held her at arm's length, and gazed at her.

"Eh, lassie!" he said, "ye're grown a wumman! Ye'll hae the bigger hert to love the Lord wi'. I thocht he wad hae ta'en ye awa' a bairn, afore ever we had seen what ye wad turn oot; and sair wad I hae missed ye, bairn! And a' the sairer that I hae lost auld Tibbie. A man canna do weel withoot some woman or ither to tell him the trowth. I wiss sair that I hadna been sae cankert wi' her, whiles."

"I never heard her say that ye was ever cankert, Thomas."

"No, I daursay no. She wadna say't. She wadna say't. She was a kin'-herted auld body."

"But she didna like to be ca'd auld," interposed Annie, with a smile half in sad reminiscence of her friend's peculiarities, half in gentle humour, seeking to turn the conversation, and so divert Thomas from further self-accusation.

"Aweel, she's nae that auld noo!" he answered with a responsive smile. "Eh, lassie! it maun be a fine thing to hae the wisdom o' age alang wi' the licht hert and the strang banes o' yowth."

I'm growin' some auld mysel. I was ance prood o' that airm—"and it was a brawny right arm he stretched out—"and there was no man within ten mile o' Glamerton 'at cud lift what I cud lift whan I was five and twenty. I daursay that luiks gey auld to you, no?—But ony lad i' the mason-trade micht ding me at liftin' noo; for I'm stiff i' the back, and my airm's jist reid-het whiles wi' the rheumateeze; and gin I lift onything by ordinar', it gars me host like a cat wi' the back-bane o' a herrin' in her thrapple.—Ye'll be gaun back to Robert Bruce or lang, I'm thinkin'."

"I dinna ken. The mistress has said naething about it yet. And I'm in nae hurry, I can tell ye, Thomas."

"Weel, I daursay no. Ye maun tak a heap o' care, lass, that the plenty and content ye're livin' in doesna spring up and choke the word."

"Ay, Thomas," answered Annie with a smile; "it's a fine thing to hae reamy milk to yer parritch, in place o' sky-blue to meal and water."

What could ail the lassie? She had never spoken lightly about anything before. Was she too, like his old friend Alec, forgetting the splendour of her high calling?

Such was the thought that passed through Thomas's mind; but the truth was that, under the genial influences of home tenderness and early

womanhood, a little spring of gentle humour had begun to flow softly through the quiet fields of her childlike nature.

The mason gazed at her doubtfully, and was troubled. Annie saw his discomposure, and taking his great hand in her two little ones, looked full into his cold grey eyes, and said, still smiling,

“Eh, Thomas! wadna ye hae a body mak’ a grainy fun whiles whan it comes o’ itsel’ like?”

But Thomas, anxious about the state of mind that produced the change, did not show himself satisfied.

“We dinna hear ’at the Saviour himsel’ ever sae muckle as smiled,” said he.

“Weel, that wad hae been little wonner, wi’ what he had upo’ ’m. But I’m nae sure that he didna, for a’ that. Fowk disna aye tell whan a body lauchs. I’m thinkin’ gin ane o’ the bairnies that he took upo’ ’s knee,—an’ he was ill-pleased wi’ them ’at wad hae sheued them awa’,—gin ane o’ them had hauden up his wee timmer horsie, wi’ a broken leg, and had prayed him to work a miracle an’ men’ the leg, he wadna hae wrocht a miracle maybe, I daursay, but he wad hae smilet, or maybe lauchen a wee, and he wad hae men’t the leg some gait or ither to please the bairnie. And gin ’t had been me, I wad raither hae had the men’in’ o’ ’s

ain twa han's, wi' a knife to help them maybe, nor twenty miracles upo' 't."

Thomas gazed at her for a moment in silence. Then with a slow shake of the head, and a full-blown smile on his rugged face, he said:

"Ye 're a curious cratur', Annie. I dinna richtly ken what to mak' o' ye whiles. Ye're like a suckin' bairn and a gran'mither baith in ane. But I'm thinkin', atween the twa, ye're maistly i' the richt. And ye hae set me richt afore noo.—Sae ye're nae gaun hame to the Bruces again?"

"I didna say that," answered Annie; "I only said I had h'ard naething about it yet."

"What for dinna ye jine the kirk, noo?" said Thomas abruptly, after having tried in vain to find a gradual introduction to the question. "Dinna ye think it's a deowty to keep in min' what the great Shepherd did for his ain chosen flock?"

"Nae doot o' that, Thomas. But I never thocht o' sic a thing. I dinna even ken 'at I am aye o' the elec'."

"Ye dinna ken yet?"

"No," answered Annie, sorrowfully.

"I wonner at that," returned Thomas.

"And, forby," resumed Annie, "gin I war, I'm no guid eneuch yet. An' besides that——"

But here she stopped and remained silent.

“What was ye gaun to say?” asked Thomas, encouragingly.

But Annie did not reply. She looked perplexed. With the intuition of sympathy springing from like thoughts, Thomas guessed what was moving in her mind.

“I ken what ye’re thinkin,’ lassie,” he said. “Ye canna help thinkin’ that there’s some in oor mids wha may as weel be nameless, for that they are no credit to us, neyther wad be to ony body o’ whuch they war jined members. Isna that yer trouble, bairn?”

“’Deed is’t, in pairt, Thomas. But it’s mair the state o’ my ain feelin’s wi’ regaird to ane in particular, nor the fac’ that he’s a member o’ the kirk. Gin I cud be sure that Mr. Bruce wad aye be at the ither en’ o’ the seat, I micht think o’ ’t. It’s no that I wadna lat him tak it. I daurna meddle wi’ that. But gin I had to tak’ it frae his han’, I jist cudna regaird it as the sacred thing that it bude to be considered.”

Thomas remained silent, with downcast thoughtful look.

It may be necessary to state, in explanation of Annie’s feelings, that the Scotch, at the celebration of the Eucharist, sit in long rows, and pass the bread, each breaking off a portion for himself, and the wine, from the one to the other.



The compressed lips and motionless countenance of Thomas showed that he was thinking more than he was prepared to clothe in words. After standing thus for a few moments, he lifted his head, and returning no answer to Annie's exposition of her feelings, bade her *good bye*, and walked away.

The drift of Thomas's reflections I shall now help my reader to see.

Their appetite for prophecy having assuaged with the assuaging flood, the people of Glamerton had no capacity for excitement left. The consequence was that the congregations, especially the evening congregations, began at once to diminish. Having once ceased to feel anxiety about some vague impending vengeance, comparatively few chose to be rated any longer about their sins; while some seeing how in the *spate* the righteous were taken and the wicked left, felt themselves aggrieved, and staid at home on the Sunday nights. Nor was the deterioration confined to the congregations. Not only had the novelty of Mr. Turnbull's style worn off, but he felthimself that he could not preach with the same fervour as before; the fact being that he had exhausted the electric region of the spiritual brain, and without repose it could never fulminate again. A second and worse consequence was that, in his dissatisfaction with himself,

he attempted to *get up* his former excitement by preaching as if he were still under its influences. Upon this his conscience sternly accused him of hypocrisy and pretence, which reacted in paralysis; and the whole business became wretched. Even his greatest admirers were compelled to acknowledge that Mr. Turnbull had lost much of his unction, and that except the Spirit were poured down upon them from on high, their prospects were very disheartening. For even the best men in *the Church*, as, following apostolic example without regard to circumstance, they called each separate community of the initiate, were worldly enough to judge of the degree of heavenly favour shown them, not by the love they bore to the truth and to each other, not by the purity of their collective acts and the prevalence of a high standard of morality in the individual—poor as even these divine favours would have been as a measure of the divine favour—but, in a great degree, by the success which attended the preaching of their pastor, in adding to their esoteric communion, and, still worse, by the numbers which repaired to their court of the Gentiles—their exoteric congregation. Nor, it must be confessed, was even Thomas Crann, in many things so wise and good, and in all things so aspiring, an exception. Pondering over the signs of disfavour and decay, he arrived

at the conclusion that there must be an Achan in the camp. And indeed if there were an Achan, he had known well enough, for a long time, who would turn out to represent that typical person. Of course, it could be no other than the money-loving, the mammon-worshipping Robert Bruce. When, therefore, he found that such a pearl of price as Annie Anderson was excluded from their "little heaven below," by the presence of this possible anti-typical Achan, he could not help feeling his original conviction abundantly strengthened. But he did not see what could be done.

Meantime, on the loving, long-remembering Annie, dawned a great pleasure. James Dow came to see her, and had a long interview with Mrs. Forbes, the result of which she learned after his departure. One of the farm-servants who had been at Howglen for some years was going to leave at the next term, and Mrs. Forbes had asked Dow whether he knew of one to take his place. Whereupon he had offered himself, and they had arranged everything for his taking the position of grieve or foreman, which post he had occupied with James Anderson, and was at present occupying some ten or twelve miles up the hill-country. Few things could have pleased Mrs. Forbes more; for James Dow was recognized throughout the country as the very pattern of what a foreman

ought to be ; his character for saving his employers all possible expense, having more than its just proportion in generating this reputation ; for this is a capacity which, in a poor country where it is next to impossible to be enterprising, will naturally receive at least its full share of commendation. Of late, Mrs. Forbes had found it more difficult to meet her current expenses ; for Alec's requirements at college were heavier this year than they had been before ; so that, much to her annoyance, she had been compelled to delay the last half-yearly payment of Bruce's interest. Nor could she easily bear to recall the expression upon his keen ferret-like face when she informed him that it would be more convenient to pay the money a month hence. That month had passed, and another, before she had been able to do so. For although the home-expenses upon a farm in Scotland are very small, yet in the midst of plenty, money is often scarce enough. Now, however, she hoped that, with James Dow's management, things would go better, and she would be able to hold her mental head a little higher in her own presence. So she was happy, knowing nothing of the cloud that was gathering over the far-off university, soon to sweep northward, and envelope Howglen in its dusky folds.

## CHAPTER IV.

A STATE of something like emotional stupefaction succeeded to the mental tumult of that evening when first Alec saw that his worst and wildest forebodings might be even already on the point of realization. The poor glimmer of hope that remained was only enough to show how terrible was the darkness around it. It was well for him that gratitude required of him some ministrations beyond those which he took out of his landlady's hands the moment he came in from college. His custom was to carry his books to the sick man's room, and wearily pretend, without even seeming, to be occupied with them. While thus unemployed he did not know how anxiously he was watched by the big blue eyes of his friend, shining like two fallen stars from the cavern of his bed. But, as I have said, he had more to do for him than merely to supply his few wants when he came home. For the patient's uneasiness about the books and the cata-

logue led him to offer not only to minister to the wants of the students in the middle of the day, but to spend an hour or two every evening in carrying on the catalogue. This engagement was a great relief to the pro-librarian, and he improved more rapidly thenceforth. Whether Alec's labour was lightened or not by the fact that he had a chance of seeing Kate pass the windows, I cannot tell, but I think any kind of emotion lightens labour. And I think the labour lightened his pain; and I know he was not so absorbed in his unhappiness, though at times the flashes of a keen agony broke from the dull cloud of his misery, as to perform the duties he had undertaken in a perfunctory manner. The catalogue made slow but steady progress. And so did the librarian.

"Mr. Forbes," said Mr. Fraser, looking at him kindly, one morning after the lecture, "you are a great stranger now. Won't you come and spend to-morrow evening with us? We are going to have a little party. It is my birthday, though I'm sure I don't know why an old man like me should have any birthdays. But it's not my doing. Kate found it out, and she would have a merry-making. I think myself after a man's forty, he should go back to thirty-nine, thirty-eight, and so on, indicating his progress towards none at all. That gives him a good sweep before he comes to two, one,



ought. At which rate I shall be thirteen to-morrow."

The old man had rattled on as if he saw the cloud on Alec's face and would dispel it by kindness. I believe he was uneasy about him. Whether he divined the real cause of his gloom, or feared that he was getting into bad ways, I cannot tell.

He did not succeed, however, in dispelling the cloud; for the thought at this moment passing through Alec's mind was, that Kate had wanted the merry-making in order to have Beauchamp there. But with a feeling like that which makes one irritate a smarting wound, or urge on an aching tooth, he resolved to go and have his pain in earnest.

He was the first to arrive.

Kate was in the drawing-room at the piano, radiant in white—lovelier than ever. She rose and met him with some embarrassment, which she tried to cover under more than usual kindness. She had not wished Alec to be one of the company, knowing it would make him unhappy and her uncomfortable.

"Oh Kate!" said Alec, overpowered with her loveliness.

Kate took it for a reproach, and making no reply, withdrew her hand and turned away. Alec saw as she turned that all the light had gone out of her face. But that instant Beauchamp entered, and as she turned once more to greet him, the



light flashed from her face and her eyes, as if her heart had been a fountain of rosy flame. Beauchamp was magnificent, the rather quiet tartan of his clan being lighted up with all the silver and jewels of which the dress admits. In the hilt of his dirk, in his brooch, and for buttons, he wore a set of old family topazes, instead of the commoner cairngorm, so that as he entered he flashed golden light from the dark green cloud of his tartan. Not observing Alec, he advanced to Kate with the confidence of an accepted lover; but some motion of her hand or glance from her eyes warned him in time. He looked round, started a little, and greeted him with a slight bow, of which Alec took no notice. He then turned to Kate and began to talk in a low tone, to which she listened with her head hanging like the topmost bell of a wild hyacinth. As he looked, the last sickly glimmer of Alec's hope died out in darkness. But he bore up in bitterness, and a demon awoke in him laughing. He saw the smooth handsome face, the veil of so much that was mean and wretched, bending over the loveliness he loved, yet the demon in him only laughed.

It may appear strange that they should behave so like lovers in the presence of any third person, much more in the presence of Alec. But Beauchamp had now made progress enough to secure

his revenge of mortification; and for that, with the power which he had acquired over Kate's sensitive nature, he drew her into the sphere of his flaunted triumph, and made her wound Alec to the root of his vulnerable being. Had Alec then seen his own face, he would have seen upon it the sneer that he hated so upon that of Beauchamp. For all wickedness tends to destroy individuality, and declining natures assimilate as they sink.

Other visitors arrived, and Alec found a strange delight in behaving as if he knew of no hidden wound, and his mind were in a state of absolute *négligé*. But how would he meet the cold wind blowing over the desolate links?

Some music, and a good deal of provincial talk—not always less human and elevating than the metropolitan—followed. Beauchamp moderated his attentions to Kate; but Alec saw that it was in compliance with his desire that, though reluctant, she went a second time to the piano. The song she had just sung was insignificant enough; but the second was one of the ballads of her old Thulian nurse, and had the merit of an antique northern foundation at least, although it had evidently passed through the hands of a lowland poet before it had, in its present form, found its way northwards again to the Shetland Isles. The first tone of the ghostly music startled

Alec, and would have arrested him even if the voice had not been Kate's.

“Sweep up the flure, Janet.

Put on anither peat.

It's a lown and starry nicht, Janet,

And neither could nor weet.

And it's open hoose we keep the nicht

For ony that may be oot.

It's the nicht atween the Sancts and Souls,

Whan the bodiless gang about.

Set the chairs back to the wa', Janet ;

Mak' ready for quaiet fowk.

Hae a' thing as clean as a win'in' sheet:

They comena ilka ook.

There's a spale\* upo' the flure, Janet ;

And there's a rowan-berry :

Sweep them into the fire, Janet.—

They'll be welcomer than merry.

Syne set open the door, Janet—

Wide open for wha kens wha ;

As ye come benn to yer bed, Janet,

Set it open to the wa'."

\* A wood-shaving.

She set the chairs back to the wa',  
But ane made o' the birk;  
She sweepit the flure,—left that ae spale,  
A lang spale o' the aik.

The nicht was lowne, and the stars sat still,  
Aglintin' doon the sky;  
And the souls crap oot o' their mooly graves,  
A' dank wi' lyin' by.

She had set the door wide to the wa',  
And blawn the peats rosy reid;  
They war shoonless feet gaed oot and in,  
Nor clampit as they gaed.

Whan midnight cam', the mither rase—  
She wad gae see and hear.  
Back she cam' wi' a glowerin' face,  
And sloomin' wi' verra fear.

“ There's ane o' them sittin' afore the fire !  
Janet, gang na to see :  
Ye left a chair afore the fire,  
Whaur I tauld ye nae chair sud be.”

Janet she smiled in her mother's face :  
She had brunt the roddin reid ;  
And she left aneath the birken chair  
The spale frae a coffin-lid.

She rase and she gaed butt the hoose,  
Aye steekin' door and door.  
Three hours gaed by or her mother heard  
Her fit upo' the floor.

But whan the grey cock crew, she heard  
The sound o' shoeless feet ;  
Whan the red cock crew, she heard the door,  
And a sough o' wind and weet.

And Janet cam' back wi' a wan face,  
But never a word said she ;  
No man ever heard her voice lood oot,  
It cam' like frae ower the sea.

And no man ever heard her lauch,  
Nor yet say alas or wae ;  
But a smile aye glimmert on her wan face,  
Like the moonlicht on the sea.

And ilka nicht 'tween the Sancts and the Souls,  
Wide open she set the door ;  
And she mendit the fire, and she left ae chair,  
And that spale upo' the floor.

And at midnight she gaed butt the hoose,  
Aye steekin' door and door.  
Whan the reid cock crew, she cam' benn the hoose,  
Aye wanner than afore—

Wanner her face, and sweeter her smile ;  
Till the seventh All Souls' eve.  
Her mother she heard the shoeless feet,  
Said "she's comin', I believe."

But she camna benn, and her mother lay ;  
For fear she cudna stan'.  
But up she rase and benn she gaed,  
Whan the gowden cock had crawn.

And Janet sat upo' the chair,  
White as the day did daw ;  
Her smile was a sunglint left on the sea,  
Whan the sun has gane awa'.

Alec had never till now heard her sing really. Wild music and eerie ballad together filled and absorbed him. He was still gazing at her lovely head, when the last wailing sounds of the accompaniment ceased, and her face turned round, white as Janet's. She gave one glance of unutterable feeling up into Beauchamp's face, and hiding her own in her handkerchief, sobbed out, "You would make me sing it !" and left the room.

Alec's heart swelled with indignant sympathy. But what could he do ? The room became insupportable the moment she had quitted it, and he made his way to the door. As he opened it, he could not help glancing at Beauchamp. Instead

of the dismay he expected, he saw triumph on his pale countenance, and in the curl of his scarred lip.—He flew frantic from the house. The sky was crowded with the watchings of starry eyes. To his fancy, they were like Beauchamp's, and he hated them. Seeking refuge from their gaze he rushed to the library, and threw himself on a heap of foreign books, which he had that morning arranged for binding. A ghostly glimmer from the snow, and the stars overhead, made the darkness thinner about the windows; but there was no other light in the place; and there he lay, feeling darker within than the night around him. Kate was weeping in her room; that contemptible ape had wounded her; and instead of being sorry for it, was rejoicing in his power. And he could not go to her; she would receive no comfort from him.

It was a bitter hour. Eternity must be very rich to make up for some such hours.

He had lain a long time with his face down upon the books, when he suddenly started and listened. He heard the sound of an opening door, but not of the door in ordinary use. Thinking it proceeded from some thievish intent, he kept still. There was another door, in a corner, covered with books, but it was never opened at all. It communicated with a part of the buildings of the quadrangle which had been used for the abode



of the students under a former economy. It had been abandoned now for many years, as none slept any longer within the walls of the college. Alec knew all this, but he did not know that there was also a communication between this empty region and Mr. Fraser's house; or that the library had been used before as a *tryst* by Beauchamp and Kate.

The door closed, and the light of a lantern flashed to the ceiling. Wondering that such a place should excite the cupidity of housebreakers, yet convinced that such the intruders were, Alec moved gently into the embrasure of one of the windows, against the corner of which abutted a screen of bookshelves. A certain light rustling, however, startled him into doubt, and the doubt soon passed into painful conviction.

"Why were you so unkind, Patrick?" said the voice of Kate. "You know it kills me to sing that ballad. I cannot bear it."

"Why should you mind singing an old song your nurse taught you?"

"My nurse learned it from my mother. Oh Patrick! what *would* my mother say if she knew that I met you this way? You shouldn't ask me. You know I can refuse you nothing; and you should be generous."

Alec could not hear his answer, and he knew

why. That scar on his lip! Kate's lips there!

Of course Alec ought not to have listened. But the fact was, that, for the time, all consciousness of free will and capability of action had vanished from his mind. His soul was but a black gulf into which poured the Phlegethontic cataract of their conversation.

"Ah, yes, Patrick! Kisses are easy. But you hurt me terribly sometimes. And I know why. You hate my cousin, poor boy!—and you want me to hate him too. I wonder if you love me as much as he does!—or did; for surely I have been unkind enough to cure him of loving me. Surely you are not jealous of him?"

"Jealous of *him*!—I should think not!"

Human expression could have thrown no more scorn into the word.

"But you hate him."

"I don't hate him. He's not worth hating—the awkward steer!—although I confess I have cause to dislike him, and have some gratification in mortifying him. But he's not a pleasant subject to me."

"His mother has been very kind to me. I wish you would make it up with him for my sake, Patrick. He may be uncouth and awkward—I don't know—but that's no reason for hating him. I love you so that I could love anybody that loved

you. You don't know how I love you, Patrick—though you are unkind sometimes. The world used to look so cold, and narrow, and grey; but now there is a flush like sunset over everything, and I am so happy! Patrick, don't make me do things before my cousin that will hurt him."

Alec knew that she pressed closer to Beauchamp, and offered him her face.

"Listen, my Kate," said Beauchamp. "I know there are things you cannot bear to hear; but you must hear this."

"No, no, not now!" answered Kate, shuddering.

Alec knew how she looked—saw her with the eyes of his memory as she had looked once or twice—and listened unconscious of any existence but that of hearing.

"You must, Kate, and you shall," said Beauchamp. "You asked me only yesterday how I came by that scar on my lip. I will tell you. I rebuked that cousin of yours for unmanly behaviour in the dissecting-room, the very first time he entered it. He made no reply; but when we came out, he struck me."

The icy mood passed away, and such a glow of red anger rushed through Alec's veins, that he felt as if the hot blast from molten metal were playing upon his face. That Kate should marry such a

man! The same moment he stood in the light of the lantern; with one word on his lips:

“Liar!”

Beauchamp’s hand sprang to the hilt of his dirk. Alec laughed with bitter contempt.

“Pooh!” he said; “even you will not say I am a coward. Do if you dare!”

After her first startled cry, Kate had stood staring and trembling. Beauchamp’s presence of mind returned. He thrust his half-drawn dirk into its sheath, and with a curl of the scarred lip, said coldly—

“Eaves-dropping.”

“Lying,” retorted Alec.

“Well, I must say,” returned Beauchamp, assuming his most polished tone, “that this kind of conversation is at least unusual in the presence of a lady.”

Without making him any reply, Alec turned to Kate.

“Kate,” he said, “I swear to you that I struck him only after fair warning, after insult to myself, and insult to the dead. He did not know that I was able to give him the chastisement he deserved.”

I doubt if Kate heard any of this speech. She had been leaning against a book-case, and from it she now slipped sideways to the floor.

"You brute!" said Beauchamp. "You will answer to me for this."

"When you please," returned Alec. "Meantime you will leave this room, or I will make you."

"Go to the devil!" said Beauchamp, again laying his hand on his dirk.

"You can claim fair play no more than a wolf," said Alec, keeping his eye on his enemy's hand. "You had better go. I have only to ring this bell and the sacrist will be here."

"That is your regard for your cousin! You would expose her to the servants!"

"I will expose her to anything rather than to you. I have held my tongue too long."

"And you will leave her lying here?"

"You will leave her lying here."

"That is your revenge, is it?"

"I want no revenge even on you, Beauchamp. Go."

"I will neither forestall nor forget mine," said Beauchamp, as he turned and went out into the quadrangle.

When Alec came to think about it, he could not understand the ease of his victory. He did not know what a power their first encounter had given him over the inferior nature of Beauchamp, in whom the animal, unsupported by the moral, was cowed

before the animal in Forbes, backed by the sense of right.

And above all things Beauchamp hated to find himself in an awkward position, which certainly would have been his case if Alec had rung for the sacrist. Nor was he capable of acting well on the spur of any moment. He must have plans: those he would carry out remorselessly.—So he went away to excogitate further revenge. But he was in love with Kate just enough to be uneasy as to the result of Alec's interview with her.

Returning to Kate, Alec found her moaning. He supported her head as she had done for him in that old harvest field, and chafed her chilly hands. Before her senses had quite returned, she began to talk, and, after several inarticulate attempts, her murmured words became plain.

“Never mind, dear,” she said; “the boy is wild. He doesn't know what he says. Oh, Patrick, my heart is aching with love to you. It is good love, I know; and you must be kind to me, and not make me do what I don't like to do. And you must forgive my poor cousin, for he did not mean to tell lies. He fancies you bad, because I love you so much more than him. But you know I can't help it, and I daresay he can't either.”

Alec felt as if a green flame were consuming his

brain. And the blood surged so into his head and eyes, that he saw flashes of fire between him and Kate. He could not remain in such a false position, with Kate taking him for her lover. But what an awful shock it would be to her when she discovered the truth! How was it to be avoided? He must get her home before she recovered quite. For this there was but one chance, and that lay in a bold venture. Mr. Fraser's door was just across a corner of the quadrangle. He would carry her to her own room. The guests must be gone, and it was a small household, so that the chance of effecting it undiscovered was a good one. He did effect it: in three minutes more he had laid her on her own bed, had rung her bell, and had sped out of the house as fast and as quietly as he could.

His gratification at having succeeded in escaping Kate's recognition, bore him up for a little, but before he reached home his heart felt like a burnt out volcano.

Meantime Mr. Cupples had been fretting over his absence, for he had come to depend very much upon Alec. At last he had rung the bell, knowing that Mrs. Leslie was out, and that it would be answered by a dirty girl in nailed shoes turned down at the heel: she would be open to a bribe. Nor did she need much persuasion besides. Off



she ran with his empty bottle, to get it filled at the grocer's over the way.

When Alec came home, he found his friend fast asleep in bed, the room smelling strongly of toddy, and the bottle standing on the table beside the empty tumbler. Faint in body, mind, and spirit, as if from the sudden temptation of an unholy power, he caught up the bottle. The *elixir mortis* flowed gurgling from the narrow neck into the tumbler which Mr. Cupples had lately emptied. Heedless and reckless, he nearly filled it, and was just lifting it to his lips, when a cry half-moulded into a curse rang from the bed, and the same instant the tumbler was struck from his hand. It flew in fragments against the grate, and the spirit rushed in a roaring flame of demoniacal wrath up the chimney.

“Damn you!” half-shrieked, half-panted Mr. Cupples in his night-shirt, at Alec’s elbow, still under the influence of the same spirit he had banned on its way to Alec Forbes’s empty house—“damn you, bantam! ye’ve broken my father’s tumler. De’il tak’ ye for a vaigabon’! I’ve a guid min’ to thraw the neck o ye!”

Seeing Mr. Cupples was only two-thirds of Alec’s height, and one-half of his thickness, the threat, as he then stood, was rather ludicrous. Miserable as he was, Alec could not help laughing.

“Ye may lauch, bantam! but I want no companion in hell to cast his damnation in my teeth. Gin ye touch that bottle again, faith, I’ll brain ye, and sen’ ye into the ithar warl’ withoot that handle at least for Sawtan to catch a grip o’ ye by. And there *may* be a handle somewhaur o’ the richt side o’ ye for some saft-hertit angel to lay han’ upo’ and gie ye a lift whaur ye ill deserve to gang, ye thrawn buckie! Efter a’ that I hae said to ye!—Damn ye!”

Alec burst into a loud roar of laughter. For there was the little man standing in his shirt, shaking a trembling fist at him, stammering with eagerness, and half-choked with excitement.

“Gang to yer bed, Mr. Cupples, or ye’ll tak’ yer deith o’ cauld. Luik here.”

And Alec seized the bottle once more. Mr. Cupples flew at him, and would have knocked the bottle after the glass, had not Alec held it high above his reach, exclaiming,

“Toots, man! I’m gaein’ to pit it intil its ain neuk. Gang ye to yer bed, and lippen to me.”

“Ye gie me yer word, ye winna pit it to yer mou’?”

“I do,” answered Alec.

The same moment Mr. Cupples was floundering on the bed in a perplexed attempt to get under the

bed-clothes. A violent fit of coughing was the consequence of the exertion.

"Ye're like to toom yer ain kist afore ye brain my pan, Mr. Cupples," said Alec.

"Haud yer tongue, and lat me host (*cough*) in peace," panted Mr. Cupples.

When the fit was over, he lay still, and stared at Alec. Alec had sat down in Mr. Cupples's easy chair, and was staring at the fire.

"I see," muttered Mr. Cupples. "This'll do no longer. The laddie's gaein' to the dogs for want o' bein' luikit efter. I maun be up the morn. It's thae wimmen! thae wimmen! Puir things! they canna aye help it; but, de'il tak' them for bonnie oolets! mony's the fine laddie they drive into the cluiks o' auld Horny. Michtna some gran' discovery be made in Pheesiology, to enable the warl' to gang on wantin' them? But, Lord preserve me! I wad hae naething left worth greetin' aboot!"

He hid his face in the bed-clothes.

Alec hearing part of this muttered discourse, had grown attentive, but there was nothing more forthcoming. He sat for a little, staring helplessly into the fire. The world was very blank and dismal.

Then he rose to go to bed; for Mr. Cupples did not require him now. Finding him fast asleep

under the bed-clothes, he made him as comfortable as he could. Then he locked the closet where the whisky was, and took the key with him.

Their mutual care in this respect was comical.

## CHAPTER V.

THE next morning, Alec saw Mr. Cupples in bed before he left. His surprise therefore was great when, entering the library after morning lectures, he found him seated in his usual place, hard at work on his catalogue. Except that he was yet thinner and paler than before, the only difference in his appearance was that his eyes were brighter and his complexion was clearer.

“You here, Mr. Cupples!” he exclaimed.

“What garred ye lock the press last nicht, ye deevil?” returned the librarian, paying no attention to Alec’s expression of surprise. “But I say, bantam,” he continued, not waiting for a reply, which indeed was unnecessary, “ye hae dune yer wark weel—verra near as weel’s I cud hae dune ’t mysel’.”

“I’m sure, Mr. Cupples, it was the least thing I could do.”

“Ye impident cock! It was the verran best you

cud do, or ye wadna hae come within sicht o' me. I mayna be muckle at thrashin' attoarneys, or cuttin' up deid corpuses, but I defy ye to come up to me at onything conneckit wi' buiks."

"Faith! Mr. Cupples, ye may gang farther nor that. Efter what ye hae dune for me, gin I war a general, ye sud lead the Forlorn Hope."

"Ay, ay. It's a forlorn hope, a' 'at I'm fit for, Alec Forbes," returned Cupples sadly.

This struck Alec so near his own grief that he could not reply with even seeming cheerfulness. He said nothing. Mr. Cupples resumed.

"I hae twa three words to say to you, Alec Forbes. Can ye believe in a man as weel's ye can in a wumman?" {

"I can believe in you, Mr. Cupples. That I'll sweir till."

"Weel, jist sit doon there, and carry on frae whaur ye loot sit. Syne efter the three o'clock lecture—wha is't ye're atten'in' this session?—we'll gang doon to Luckie Cumstie's, and hae a moufu' o' denner—she'll do her best for me—an' I'll hae jist ae tumler o' toddy—but de'il a drap sall ye hae, bantam—and de'il a word will I say to ye there. But we'll come back here, and i' the gloamin', I'll gie ye a bit episode i' my life.—Episode did I ca' 't? Faith it's my life itsel', and no worth muckle, eyther. Ye'll be the first

man that ever I tell't it till. And ye may judge o' my regaird for ye frae that fac'."

Alec worked away at his catalogue, and then attended the afternoon lecture. The dinner at Luckie Cumstie's followed—of the plainest, but good. Alec's trouble had not yet affected the region in which Paley seats the organ of happiness. And while an appetite exists, a dinner will be interesting. Just as the gloamin was fading into night, they went back to the library.

"Will I rin ower to the sacrist's for a licht?" asked Alec.

"Na, na ; lat be. The mirk's mercifu', whiles."

"I canna unnerstan' ye, Mr. Cupples. Sin ever I kent ye i' this library, I never kent ye bide the oncome o' the nicht. As sune's the gloamin began to fa', ye aye flew to yer hat, and oot at the door as gin there had been a ghaist gettin' its banes thegither oot o' the dark to come at ye."

"Maybe sae there was, bantam. Sae nane o' your jokin'."

"I didna mean to anger ye, Mr. Cupples."

"Whaur naething's meant, naething's dune. I'm nae angert. And that ye'll sune see. Sit ye doon there; and tak yer plaid aboot ye, or ye'll be cauld."

"Ye hae nae plaid yersel. Ye're mair like to be cauld nor I am."



“I weir my plaid o’ my inside. Ye haena had ony toddy. Deil’s broo! it may weel haud a body warm. It comes frae a het quarter.”

The open oak ceiling overhead was getting very dark by this time; and the room, divided and crowded with books in all directions, left little free course to the light that struggled through the dusty windows. The friends seated themselves on the lower steps of an open circular oak staircase which wound up to a gallery running round the walls.

“Efter I had taen my degree,” began Mr. Cupples, “frae the han’ o’ this same couthy auld mither, I heard o’ a grit leebrary i’ the north—I winna say whaur—that wantit the han’ o’ a man that kened what he was aboot, to pit it in dacent order, sae that a body cud lay his han’s upon a buik whan he wantit it, and no be i’ the condition o’ Tantalus, wi’ watter at the mou, but nane for the hause (*throat*). Dinna imaigin’ it was a public library. Na, na. It belonged to a grit an’-gran’ hoose—the Lord hae respec till ’t, for it’s nae joke o’ a hoose that—as I weel kent afore a’ was ower! Weel, I wrought awa’, likin’ the wark weel, for a buik’s the bonniest thing i’ the warl’ but ane, and there’s no dirl (*thrill*) in ’t whan ye lay han’s upo’ ’t, as there is, guid kens, in the ither. Man, ye had better lay han’s upon a torpedo, or a galvanic

battery, nor upon a woman—I mean a woman that ye hae ony attraction till—for she'll gar ye dirl till ye dinna ken yer thoomb frae yer muckle tae. But I was speikin' aboot buiks an' no aboot women, only somehow whatever a man begins wi', he'll aye en' aff wi' the same thing. The Lord hae a care o' them, for they're awfu' craters! They're no like ither fowk a'thegither. Weel, ye see, I had a room till mysel', forby the library an' my bedroom—an' a gran' place that was! I didna see onything o' the faimily, for I had my denner and my wine and a' thing human stammack cud desire served up till me i' my ain room. But ae day, my denner was made up o' ae mess efter anither, vera fine nae doot, but unco queer and ootlandish, and I had nae appetect, and I cudna eat it. Sae I rase, afore my ordinar' time, and gaed back to my wark. I had taen twa or three glasses o' a dooms fine tippie they ca' Madeira, an' a moufu' o' cheese—that was a'. Weel, I sat doon to my catalogue there, as it micht be here; but I hadna sat copyin' the teetles o' the buiks laid oot upo' the muckle table afore me, for mair nor twa minutes, whan I heard a kin' o' a reestlin', an' I thocht it was mice, to whilk I'm a deidly enemy ever sin they ate half o' a first edition o' the *Fairy Queen*, conteenin' only the first three buiks, ye ken, o' whilk they consumed an' nae doot

assimilated ae haill buik and full a half o' anither. But whan I luikit up, what sud I see but a wee leddy, in a goon the colour o' a clood that's takin' nae pairt i' the sunset, but jist luikin' on like, stan'in afore the buik-shelves i' the further en' o' the room. Noo I'm terrible lang-sichtit, and I had pitten the buiks i' that pairt a' richt already wi' my ain han'—and I saw her put her han' upon a buik that was no fit for her. I winna say what it was. Some hermaphrodeet cratur had written 't that had no respec for man or woman, an' whase neck sud hae been thrawn by the midwife, for that buik cam o' sparin' o' 'm!

“ ‘Dinna touch that buik, my bonny leddy,’ I cried. ‘It’s awfu’ fu’ o’ dist and stoor. It’ll smore ye to open the twa brods o’ ’t. Yer rosy goon ’ll be clean blaudit wi’ the stew (*dust*) o’ ’t.’

“She startit and luikit roon some frichtit like, and I rase an’ gaed across the flure till her. And her face grew bonnier and bonnier as I cam nearer till her. Her nose an’ her twa eebrees jist min’d ye upo’ the picturs o’ the Holy Ghost comin’ doon like a doo; and oot aneath ilka wing there luikit a hert o’ licht—that was her twa een, that gaed throu and throu me as gin I had been a warp and they twa shuttles; and faith! they made o’ my life and o’ me what it is and I am. They wove the wab o’ me.

“Ay. They gaed oot and in, and throu and throu, and back and fore, and roon and aboot, till there wasna a nerve or a fibre o’ my bein’, but they had twisted it up jist as a spither does a flee afore he sooks the life oot o’ ’t. But that ’s a prolepsis.”

“‘Are you the librarian?’ said she, saft and sma’, like hersel’.

“‘That I am, mem,’ said I. ‘My name’s Cupples—at your service, mem.’

“‘I was looking, Mr. Cupples,’ said she, ‘for some book to help me to learn Gaelic. I want very much to read Gaelic.’

“‘Weel, mem,’ said I, ‘gin it had been ony o’ the Romance languages, or ony ane o’ the Teutonic breed, I micht hae gien ye a lift. But I doot ye maun bide till ye gang to Edinburgh, or Aberdeen, whaur ye ’ll easy fa’ in wi’ some lang-leggit bejan that ’ll be prood to instruc’ ye, and coont himsel’ ower weel paid wi’ the sicht o’ yer bonny face.’

“She turned some reid at that, and I was feared that I had angert her. But she gied a sma’ lauch, and oot at the door she gaed, wi’ her ‘rosy fleece o’ fire’ lowin’ and glimmerin’ aboot her, jist like ane o’ the seraphims that auld Crashaw sings aboot. Only she was gey sma’ for a seraph, though they ’re nae ower big. Weel, ye see, that was the first time I saw her. And I thochtna

ower muckle mair aboot her. But in a day or twa there she was again. And she had a hantle to speir at me aboot; and it took a' the knowledge I had o' buiks in general to answer her questons. In fac I was whiles compelled to confess my ignorance, which is no plesant whan a man wants to stan' weel wi' a bonny crater that spiers questons. Whan she gaed, I gaed efter her, followin' aboot at her—i' my thochts, I mean—like a hen efter her <sup>one</sup> ae chucken. She was bonnier this time than the last. She had tired o' the rosy clood, and she had on a bonny goon o' black silk, sae modest and sae rich, wi' diamond buttons up the front o' the breist o' 't. Weel, to mak a lang story short, and the shorter the better, for it's nae a plesant ane to me, she cam aftener and aftener. And she had sae muckle to say and speir aboot, that at last we had to tak doon buiks, and I had to clear a neuk o' the table. At lenth I cam to luik for her as reglar as gin she had been a ghaist, and the time that chappit upo' the auld clock had belongt to the midnight instead o' the mornin'. Ye 'll be wonnerin' what like she was. As I tell't ye, she was a wee body, wi' muckle black ecn, that lay quaiet in her face and never cam oot till they war wantit, an' a body gimp and sma', but roon' and weel proportioned throughoot. Her hand and her fit war jist past expression bonny. And she had

a' her features conformin'—a' sma' but nane o' them ower sma' in relation to ane anither. And she had a licht way wi' her, that was jist dazin'. She seemed to touch ilka thing wi' the verra tips o' her fingers, and syne ken a'thing aboot it, as gin she had a universal insicht; or raither, I wad say, her natur, notwithstanding its variety, was sae homogeneous, that whan ae nerve o' her spiritual being cam in contact wi' onything, the haill sowl o' her cam in contact wi' 't at the same time and thereby; and ilka pairt read the report efter its ain fashion, translatin' 't accordin' to 'ts ain experience; as the different provinces and languages o' the Chinese Empire read the universal written tongue. A heap o' pains I took that I micht never hae to say *I dinna ken* to sic a gleg-ee'd cratur as that. And ilka day she cam to read wi' me, and we jist got on like a mail-coach—at least I did—only the wrang road. An' she cam aye i' the efternoon and bade till the gloamin' cam doon an' it grew ower mirk to ken the words frae ane anither. And syne she wad gang and dress herself for denner, as she said.

“Ye may say I was a muckle gowk. And ye may lauch at a bairn for greitin' efter the mune; but I doot that same avarice o' the wee man comes frae a something in him that he wad be ill aff wi'oot. Better greit for the mune than no be



cawpable o' greetin' for the mune. And weel I wat, I grat for the mune, or a' was dune, and didna get it, ony mair than the lave o' my greedy wee brithers."

The night had gathered thick about them. And for a few moments out of the darkness came no sound. At length Mr. Cupples resumed :

"I maun jist confess, cauf that I was—and yet I wad hae been a greater cauf gin it hadna been sae—I cud hae lickit the verra dist aff o' the flure whaur her fit had been. Man, I never saw onything like her. The hypostasis o' her was jist perfection itsel'. Weel, ae nicht—for I wrocht full late, my een war suddenly dazed wi' the glimmer o' something white. I thocht the first minute that I had seen a ghost, and the neist that I was a ghost mysel'. For there she was in a fluffy clood o' whiteness, wi' her bonny bare shouthers and airms, and jist ae white rose in her black hair, and deil a diamond or ruby about her!

"'It's so hot,' said she, 'in the drawing-room! And they're talking such nonsense there! There's nobody speaks sense to me but you, Mr. Cupples.'

"'Deed, mem,' says I, 'I dinna ken whaur it's to come frae the nicht. For I hae nae sense left but ane, and that's nearhan' 'wi' excess o' brightness blind.' Auld Spenser says something like that, docsna he, mem?' I added, seein' that she luikit



some grave. But what she micht hae said or dune, I dinna ken ; for I sweir to ye, bantam, I know nothing that happent efter, till I cam' to mysel' at the soun' o' a lauch frae outside the door. I kenned it weel eneuch, though it was a licht flutterin' lauch. Maybe I heard it the better frae the conductin' pooer o' timmer, for my broo was doon o' the buirds o' the flure. I sprang to my feet, but the place reeled roon', and I fell. It was the lauch that killed me. What for sud she lauch?—And sic a ane as her that was no licht-heidit lassie, but cud read and unnerstan', wi the best? I suppose I had gane upo' my knees till her, and syne like the lave o' the celestials she tuik to her feathers and flew. But I ken nae mair than this : that for endless ages I gaed followin' her through the heavenly halls, aye kennin as sure 's gospel that she was ahint the neist door, and aye openin' that door upon an empty glory, to be equally certain that she was ahint the neist. And sae on I gaed till, ahint ane o' the thoosan' doors, I saw the reek-enamelled couples o' my auld mither's bit hoosie upo' the mairgin o' the bog, and she was hingin' ower me, sayin' her prayers as gin she wad gang efter them like a balloon wi' verra fervour. And whan she saw my een open, she drappit upo' her knees and gaed on prayin'. And I wonner that thae prayers warn a hearkent till. I never cud unnerstan' that."

“Hoo ken ye that they warna hearkent till?” asked Alec.

“Luik at me! Do ye ca’ that hearkenin’ till a prayer? Luik what she got me back for. Ca’ ye that an answer to prayers like my auld mither’s? Faith! I’ll be forced to repent some day for her sake, though there sudna be anither woman atween Venus and Mars but wad rive wi’ lauchin at a word frae Cosmo Cupples. But man! I wad hae repentit lang syne gin I cud hae gotten ae glimp o’ a possible justice in pittin a hert as grit’s mine into sic a misgreein’, scrimpit, contemptible body as this. The verra sowl o’ me has to draw up the legs o’ ’t to haud them inside this coffin o’ a corpus, and haud them ohn shot oot into the everlastin’ cauld. Man, the first thing I did, whan I cam’ to mysel’, was to justify her afore God for lauchin at me. Hoo could onybody help lauchin at me? It wasna her wyte. And eh! man, ye dinna ken hoo quaiet and comfortable I was in my ain min’, as sune’s I had gotten her justified to mysel’ and had laid it doon that I was ane fit to be lauchen at.—I winna lat you lauch at me, though, bantam. I tell ye that.”

“Mr. Cupples! Laugh at you! I would rather be a door-mat to the devil,” exclaimed Alec.

“Thank you, bantam.—Weel ye see, ance I had made up my min’ about that, I jist began followin’

at her again like a hungry tyke that stops the minute ye luik roon efter him—I mean i' my thochts ye ken—jist as I had been followin' her, a' the time o' my fiver, throu the halls o' heaven, as I thought them, whan they war only the sma' crinkle-crankle convolutions o' my cerebral dome—a puir heaven for a man to bide in! I hae learnt that waur and better than maist men, as I'm gaein to tell ye; for it was for the sake o' that that I begud this dismal story.—Whan I grew some better, and wan up—wad ye believe 't?—the kin'ness o' the auld, warpit, broon, wrinklet woman that brocht me furth, me Cosmo Cupples, wi' the muckle hert and the sma' body, began to console me a wee for the lauch o' that queen o' white-skinned leddies. It was but a wee, ye ken; still it was consolation. My mither thocht a heap o' me. Fowk thinks mair o' fowk, the mair they are themsels. But I wat it was sma' honour I brocht her hame, wi' my een brunt oot wi' greetin' for the mune.—I'll tell ye the lave o' 't efter we win hame. I canna bide to be here i' the dark. It's the qualet beuks a' roon' me that I canna bide. It was i' the mids o' beuks, i' the dark, that I heard that lauch. It jist blastit me and the beuks and a' thing. They aye luik as gin they war hearin' 't. For the first time I loot the gloamin come doon upo' me i' this same leebrary, a' at ance I heard the

sma' nicher o' a woman's lauch frae somewhaur in or oot o' the warl'. I grew as het 's hell, and was oot at the door in a cat-loup. And as sure 's death I'll hear 't again, gin I bide ae minute langer. Come oot wi' ye."

There was light in Mr. Fraser's drawing-room, and a shadow flitted across the blind. The frosty night, and the keenness of the stars, made Mr. Cupples shiver. Alec was in a feverous glow. When they reached home, Mr. Cupples went straight to the cupboard, swallowed a glass of the *merum*, put coals on the fire, drew his chair close to it, and said :

"It's dooms cauld! Sit doon there, bantam. Pit on the kettle first. It's an ac' o' the purest disinteresstitness, for deil a drap sall ye drink! But I'll sing ye a sang, by way o' upmak'."

"I never heard ye sing, Mr. Cupples. Ye can do a' thing, I think."

"I cudna gar a bonnie, high-born, white-handit leddy fa' in love wi' a puir futteret (*weasel*) o' a crater—ashargar (*scrag*) like Cosmo Cupples, bantam. But I can do twa or three things; an' ane o' them is, I can mak' a sang; and anither is, I can mak' a tune till 't; and a third is, I can sing the tane to the tither, that is whan I haena had either ower muckle or ower little o' the tappit hen. Noo, heark ye. This ane 's a' my ain.

GAEIN' AND COMIN'.

Whan Andrew frae Strathbogie gaed,  
The lift was lowerin' dreary ;  
The sun he wadna lift his heid ;  
The win' blew laich and eerie.  
In 's pouch he had a plack or twa,  
I vow he hadna mony ;  
Yet Andrew like a lintie sang,  
For Lizzie was sae bonny !

O Lizzie, Lizzie, bonnie lassie !  
Bonnie, saucy hizzie !  
What richt had ye to luik at me,  
And drive me daft and dizzy ?

Whan Andrew to Strathbogie cam',  
The sun was shinin' rarely ;  
He rade a horse that pranced and sprang—  
I vow he sat him fairly.  
And he had gowd to spend and spare,  
And a heart as true as ony ;  
But 's luik was doon, and his sigh was sair,  
For Lizzie was sae bonny !

O Lizzie, Lizzie, bonny hizzie !  
Ye've turned the daylight dreary.  
Ye're straucht and rare, ye're fause and fair—  
Hech ! auld John Armstrong's dearie !"

His voice was mellow and ought to have been even. His expression was perfect.

The kettle was boiling. Mr. Cupples made his toddy, and resumed his story.

“As sune’s I was able, I left my mither greitin’—God bless her!—and cam to this toon, for I wasna gaein’ to be eaten up with idleset as weel’s wi’ idolatry. The first thing I tuik till was teachin’. Noo that’s a braw thing, whan the laddies and lassies want to learn, and hae questons o’ their ain to spier. But whan they dinna care, it’s the verra deevil. Or lang, a’thing grew grey. I cared for naething and naebody. My verra dreams gaed frae me, or cam only to torment me, wi’ the reid hert o’ them changed to yallow and grey.

“Weel, ae nicht I had come hame worn oot wi’ warstlin’ to gar bairns eat that had no hunger. I spied upo’ the table a bottle o’ whusky. A frien’ o’ mine—a grocer he was—had sent it across the street to me, for it was hard upo’ Hogmanay. I rang the bell incontinent. Up comes the lass, and says I, ‘Bell, lat’s hae a kettlefu’ o’ het water.’ And to mak’ a lang story short, I cud never want het water sin syne. For I hadna drunken aboon a twa glaiss, afore the past began to revive as gin ye had come ower’t wi’ a weet sponge. A’ the colours cam’ oot upo’ ’t again, as gin they had never turned wan and grey; and I said to mysel’ wi’



pride: 'My leddy canna, wi' a' her breedin' and her bonnie skin, haud Cosmo Cupples frae lo'ein' her.' And I followed aboot at her again throu a' the oots and ins o' the story, and the past was restored to me.—That's hoo it appeared to me that nicht.—Was 't ony wonner that the first thing I did whan I cam' hame the neist nicht was to ring for the het water? I wantit naething frae Providence or Natur' but jist that the colour michtna be a' ta'en oot o' my life. The muckle deevil was in't, that I cudna stan' up to my fate like a man, and, gin my life was to cast the colour, jist tak my auld cloak aboot me, and gang on content. But I cudna. I bude to see things bonnie, or my strength gaed frae me. But ye canna-slink in at back doors that gait. I was pitten oot, and oot I maun bide. It wasna that lang afore I began to discover that it was a' a delusion and a snare. Whan I fell asleep, I wad dream whiles that, openin' the door into ane o' thae halls o' licht, there she was stan'in' lauchin' at me. And she micht hae gane on lauchin' to a' eternity—for onything I cared. And—ten times waur—I wad whiles come upon her greitin' and repentin', and haudin' oot her han' to me, and me carin' no more for her than for the beard o' a barley-stalk. And for makin' a sang—I jist steikit my lugs (*stopped my ears*) whan I heard a puir misguidit canary singin'



i' the sunshine. And I begud to hear a laich lauch far awa', and it cam' nearer and nearer ilka week, till it was ringin' i' my verra lug. But a' that was naething compairatevely. I' the mids o' a quaiet contemplation, suddenly, wi' an awfu' stoon, a ghaistly doobt pat it's heid up i' my breist, and cried: 'It's a' fause. The grey luik o' life's the true ane, and the only aspec' ye hae a richt to see.' And efter that, a' the whusky in Glenlivat cudna console me.—Luik at me noo. Ye see what I am. I can whiles sing an auld sang—but mak' a new ane!—Lord, man! I can hardly believe 'at ever I made a sang i' my life. Luik at my han' hoo it trimles. Luik at my hert. It's brunt oot. There's no a leevin' crater but yersel' that I hae ony regaird for, sin my auld mither deid. Gin it warna for buiks, I wad amaist cut my throat. And the senawtus disna think me bye and aboon half a proper companion for buiks even; as gin Cupples nicht corrup' Milton himsel, although he was ten feet ower his heid bottled in a buik. And whan I saw ye poor oot the whusky in that mad-like mainner, as gin't had been some sma' tippie o' penny ale, it jist drave me mad wi' anger."

"Weel, Mr. Cupples," Alec ventured to say, "what for dinna ye sen' the bottle to the deevil?"

"What, my ain auld tappit hen!" exclaimed Mr. Cupples, with a sudden reaction from the

seriousness of his late mood ; “ Na, na, she shanna gang to the deil till we gang thegither. Eh ! but we’ll baith hae dry insides or we win frae him again, I doobt. That drouth’s an awfu’ thing to contemplate. But speyk o’ giein’ ower the drink ! The verra attemp’—an’ dinna ye think that I haena made it—aich ! What for sud I gang to hell afore my time ? The deils themselves compleen o’ that. Na, na. Ance ye hae learned to drink, ye *canna* do wantin’ ’t. Man, dinna touch ’t. For God’s sake, for yer mither’s sake, for *ony* sake, dinna lat a drap o’ the hell-broth gang ower yer thrapple—or ye’re damned like me for ever and ever. It’s as guid’s signin’ awa’ yer sowl wi’ yer ain han’ and yer ain blude.”

Mr. Cupples lifted his glass, emptied it, and, setting it down on the table with a gesture of hatred, proceeded to fill it yet again.

## CHAPTER VI.

“I SAY, Forbes, you keep yourself all to yourself and old Cupples, away there in the new town. Come and take some supper with me to-night. It’s my birthday, old boy.”

“I don’t do much in that way, you know, Gibby.”

“Oh yes, I know. You’re never jolly but amongst the shell-fish. At least that’s what the Venall thinks of you. But for once in a way you might come.”

“Well, I don’t mind,” said Alec, really not caring what came to him or of him, and glad of anything to occupy him with no-thinking. “When shall I come?”

“At seven. We ’ll have a night of it. Tomorrow’s Saturday.”

It was hardly worth while to go home. He would not dine to-day. He would go and renew his grief by the ever-grieving sea. For his was a

young love, and his sorrow was interesting to him : he embalmed his pangs in the amber of his consciousness. So he crossed the links to the desolate sandy shore ; there let the sound of the waves enter the portals of his brain and fill all its hollow caves with their moaning ; and then wandering back to the old city, stood at length over the keystone of the bridge, and looked down into the dark water below the Gothic arch.

He heard a footstep behind him on the bridge. Looking round he saw Beauchamp. Without reason or object, he walked up to him and barred his way. Beauchamp started, and drew back.

“ Beauchamp,” said Alec, “ you are my devil.”

“ Granted,” said Beauchamp, coolly, but on his guard.

“ What are you about with my cousin ?”

“ What is that to you ?”

“ She is my cousin.”

“ I don’t care. She ’s not mine.”

“ If you play her false, as you have played me —by heavens!——”

“ Oh ! I ’ll be very kind to her. You needn’t be afraid. I only wanted to take down your damned impudence. You may go to her when you like.”

Alec’s answer was a blow, which Beauchamp was prepared for and avoided. Alec pursued the

attack with a burning desire to give him the punishment he deserved. But he turned suddenly sick, and, although he afterwards recalled a wrestle, knee to knee, the first thing he was aware of was the cold waters of the river closing over him. The shock restored him. When he rose to the surface he swam down the stream, for the banks were precipitous in the neighbourhood of the bridge. At length he succeeded in landing, and set out for home. He had not gone far, however, before he grew very faint, and had to sit down on a doorstep. Then he discovered that his arm was bleeding, and knew that Beauchamp had stabbed him. He contrived to tie it up after a fashion, and reached home without much more difficulty. Mr. Cupples had not come in. So he got his landlady to tie up his arm for him, and then changed his clothes. Fortunately the wound, although long and deep, ran lengthways between the shoulder and elbow, on the outside of the arm, and so was not of a serious character. After he was dressed, feeling quite well, he set off to keep his engagement with Gilbert Gordon.

Now how could such a thing have taken place in the third decade of the nineteenth century?—The parapet was low and the struggle was fierce. I do not think that Beauchamp intended murder, for the consequences of murder must be a serious

consideration to every gentleman. He came of a wild race, with whom a word and a steel blow had been linked for ages. And habits transmitted become instincts. He was of a cold temperament, and such a nature, once roused, is often less under control than one used to excitement: a saint will sometimes break through the bonds of the very virtue which has gained him all his repute. If we combine these considerations with the known hatred of Beauchamp, the story Alec told Cupples the next day may become in itself credible. Whether Beauchamp tried to throw him from the bridge may remain doubtful, for when the bodies of two men are locked in the wrestle of hate, their own souls do not know what they intend. Beauchamp must have sped home with the conscience of a murderer; and yet when Alec made his appearance in the class, most probably a revival of hatred was his first mental experience. But I have had no opportunity of studying the morbid anatomy of Beauchamp, and I do not care about him, save as he influences the current of this history. When he vanishes, I shall be glad to forget him.

Soon after Alec had left the house, Cupples came home with a hurried inquiry whether the landlady had seen anything of him. She told him as much as she knew, whereupon he went up stairs to his *Æschylus*, &c.

Alec said nothing about his adventure to any of his friends, for, like other Scotchmen young and old, he liked to keep things in his own hands till he knew what to do with them. At first, notwithstanding his loss of blood, he felt better than he had felt for some time; but in the course of the evening he grew so tired, and his brain grew so muddy and brown, that he was glad when he heard the order given for the boiling water. He had before now, although Mr. Cupples had never become aware of the fact, partaken of the usual source of Scotch exhilaration, and had felt nothing the worse; and now heedless of Mr. Cupples's elaborate warning—how could he be expected to mind it?—he mixed himself a tumbler eagerly. But although the earth brightened up under its influences, and a wider horizon opened about him than he had enjoyed for months before, yet half-frightened at the power of the beverage over his weakened frame, he had conscience enough to refuse a second tumbler, and rose early and went home.

The moment he entered the garret, Mr. Cupples, who had already consumed his nightly portion, saw that he had been drinking. He looked at him with blue eyes, wide-opened, dismay and toddy combining to render them of uncertain vision.

“Eh, bantam! bantam!” he said, and sank back in his chair; “ye hae been at it in spite o’ me.”



And Mr. Cupples burst into silent tears—no unusual phenomenon in men under the combined influences of emotion and drink. Notwithstanding his own elevated condition, Alec was shocked.

“Mr. Cupples,” he said, “I want to tell you all about it.”

Mr. Cupples took no notice. Alec began his story notwithstanding, and as he went on, his friend became attentive, inserting here and there an expletive to the disadvantage of Beauchamp, whose behaviour with regard to Kate he now learned for the first time. When Alec had finished, Cupples said solemnly :

“I warned ye against him, Alec. But a waur enemy nor Beauchamp has gotten a sickerer haud o’ ye, I doobt. Do ’at he like, Beauchamp’s dirk couldna hurt ye sae muckle as yer ain han’, whan ye liftit thê first glass to yer ain mou’ the nicht. Ye hae despised a’ my warnings. And sorrow and shame ’ll come o’ ’t. And I’ll hae to beir a’ the wyte o’ ’t. Yer mithers’ll jist hate me like the verra black taed that no woman can bide. Gang awa’ to yer bed. I canna bide the sicht o’ ye.”

Alec went to bed, rebuked and distressed. But not having taken enough to hurt him much, he was unfortunately able, the next morning, to regard Mr. Cupples’s lecture from a ludicrous point of view. And what danger was he in more than the

rest of the fellows, few of whom would refuse a tumbler of toddy, and fewer of whom were likely to get drunk?—Had not Alec been unhappy, he would have been in less danger than most of them; but he was unhappy.

And although the whisky had done him no great immediate injury, yet its reaction, combined with the loss of blood, made him restless all that day. So that, when the afternoon came, instead of going to Mr. Cupples in the library, he joined some of the same set he had been with the evening before. And when he came home, instead of going up stairs to Mr. Cupples, he went straight to bed.

The next morning, while he was at breakfast, Mr. Cupples made his appearance in his room.

“What cam’ o’ ye last nicht, bantam?” he asked kindly, but with evident uneasiness.

“I cam’ hame some tired, and gaed straucht to my bed.”

“But ye warn a hame verra ear’.”

“I wasna that late.”

“Ye hae been drinkin’ again. I ken by the luik o’ yer een.”

Alec had a very even temper. But a headache and a sore conscience together were enough to upset it. To be out of temper with oneself is to be out of temper with the universe.

“Did my mother commission you to look after

me, Mr. Cupples?" he asked, and could have dashed his head against the wall the next moment. But the look of pitying and yet deprecating concern in Mr. Cupples's face fixed him so that he could say nothing.

Mr. Cupples turned and walked slowly away, with only the words:

"Eh! bantam! bantam! The Lord hae pity upo' ye—and me too!"

He went out at the door bowed like an old man.

"Preserve 's, Mr. Cupples! What ails ye?" exclaimed his landlady meeting him in the passage.

"The whusky's disagreed wi' me," he said. "It's verra ill-faured o' 't. I'm sure I pay 't ilka proper attention."

Then he went down the stairs, murmuring—

"Rainbows! Rainbows! Naething for me but rainbows! God help the laddie!"

## CHAPTER VII.

IT may appear strange to some of my readers that Alec should fall into this pit immediately upon the solemn warning of his friend. He had listened to the story alone; he had never felt the warning: he had never felt the danger. Had he not himself in his own hands? He was not fond of whisky. He could take it or leave it. And so he took it; and finding that there was some comfort in it, took it again and again, seeking the society in which it was the vivifying element.—Need I depict the fine gradations by which he sank—gradations though fine yet so numerous that, in a space of time almost too brief for credit, the bleared eye, the soiled garments, and the disordered hair, would reveal how the night had been spent, and the clear-browed boy looked a sullen, troubled, dissatisfied youth? The vice had laid hold of him like a fast-wreathing, many-folded serpent. He had never had any conscious religion. His life

had never looked up to its source. All that was good in him was good of itself, not of him. So it was easy to go down, with grief staring at him over the edge of the pit. All return to the unific rectitude of a manly life must be in the face of a scorching past and a dank future—and those he could not face.

And as his life thus ebbed away from him, his feelings towards Beauchamp grew more and more bitter, approximating in character to those of Beauchamp towards him. And he soon became resolved to have his revenge on him, though it was long before he could make up his mind as to what the revenge should be.

Beauchamp avoided him constantly.

And Mr. Cupples was haunting him unseen. The strong-minded, wise-headed, weak-willed little poet, wrapped in a coat of darkness, dogged the footsteps of a great handsome good-natured ordinary-gifted wretch, who *could* never make him any return but affection, and had now withdrawn all interchange of common friendship in order that he might go the downward road unchecked. Cupples was driven almost distracted. He drank harder than ever, but with less satisfaction than ever, for he only grew the more miserable. He thought of writing to Alec's mother, but, with the indecision of a drunkard, he could not make up

his mind, and pondered over every side of the question, till he was lost in a maze of incapacity.

Bad went to worse. Vice grew upon vice.

There are facts in human life which human artists cannot touch. The great Artist can weave them into the grand whole of his Picture, but to the human eye they look too ugly and too painful. Even the man who can do the deeds dares not represent them. Mothers have to know such facts of their sons, and such facts of women like themselves.

Alec had fallen amongst a set of men who would not be satisfied till he should be as low as they—till there should be nothing left in him to remind them that they had once been better. The circle in which he began to drink had gradually contracted about him. The better sort had fallen away, and the worse had remained—chiefly older men than he, men who had come near to the enjoyment of vileness for its own sake, if that be possible, and who certainly enjoyed making others like themselves. Encouraged by their laughter and approbation, Alec began to emulate them, and would soon have had very little to learn if things had not *taken a turn*. A great hand is sometimes laid even on the fly-wheel of life's engine.

## CHAPTER VIII.

ANDREW CONSTABLE, with his wife and old-fashioned child Isie, was seated at tea in the little parlour opening from the shop, when he was called out by a customer. He remained longer than was likely to be accounted for by the transaction of business at that time of the day. And when he returned his honest face looked troubled.

“Wha was that?” asked his wife.

“Ow! it was naebody but Jeames Johnston, wantin’ a bit o’ flannin for’s wife’s coatie.”

“And what had he to say ’at keepit ye till yer tay’s no fit to drink?”

“Ow! my tay’ll do weel eneuch. It’s nae by ordinar’ cauld.”

“But what said he?”

“Weel! hm! hm!—He said it was fine frosty weather.”

“Ay, nae doobt! He kent that by the way the shuttle flew. Was that a’?”



“Na, nae freely. But cogues hae lugs, and bairns hae muckle een.”

For Isie sat on her stool staring at her father and mother alternately, and watching for the result of her mother’s attempt at picking the lock of her father’s reticence. But the moment she heard the word *lugs*, she knew that she had no chance, and her eyes grew less and their pupils grew larger. Fearing he had hurt her, Andrew said,

“Winna ye hae a starnie jam, Isie? It’s grosert-jam.”

“Na, thank ye, daddie. Maybe it wad gie me a sair wame,” answered the solemn old-faced Scotchwoman of seven.

A child who refuses jam lest it should serve her as the little book did the Apostle John, might be considered prudent enough to be intrusted with a secret. But not a word more was said on the subject, till Isie was in bed, and supposed to be fast asleep, in a little room that opened off the parlour. But she was not asleep. And the door was always left open, that she might fall asleep in the presence of her parents. Their words therefore flowed freely into her ears, although the meaning only played on her mind with a dull glimmer like that which played on her wall from the fire in the room where they sat talking.

“Ay, woman,” began Andrew, “it’ll be sair news, this, to the lady ower the watter.”

“Ye dinna mean Mistress Forbes, Anerew?”

“’Deed I mean jist her.”

“Is’t her son? Has he met wi’ ony mischeef? What’s happent till him? Is he droont, or killt? The Lord preserve’s! She’ll dee o’ t.”

“Na, lass. It’s a hantle waur nor a’ that.”

The woodcuts in Fox’s *Book of Martyrs*, of which three folio volumes in black letter lay in the room whence the conversation flowed to Isie’s ears, rose in all their hideousness before the mental vision of the child. In no other way that as torture could she conceive of worse than being killed.

“Ye gar me grue,” said Mrs. Constable, with a shudder.

“Ay, woman, ye ken little o’ the wickedness o’ great toons—hoo they lie in wait at ilka corner, wi’ their gins and their snares and their pits that they howk to catch the unwary yowth,” said Andrew, in something of the pride of superior knowledge.

From this elevation, however, he was presently pulled down in a rather ignominious fashion by his more plain-spoken though not a whit more honest wife.

“Anerew, dinna ye mint (*aim*) at speikin’ like

a chapter o' the Proverbs o' Solomon, the son o' Dawvid. Say straucht oot 'at thae coorse jawds that hing aboot i' the gloamin' hae gotten a grip o' the bonnie lad. Eh! but he'll fair ill; and the Lord hae mercy upo' him—and nane upo' them!"

"Hoot! hoot! lass; dinna speik wi' sic a venom. Ye ken wha says *Vengeance is mine?*"

"Ay, ay, weel eneuch. And I houp He'll tak's ain upo' sic brazen hizzies. You men-fowk think ye ken a hantle o' things that ye wad haud us ohn kent. But nane kens the wiles o' a wumman, least awa them 'at fa's into them, but anither wumman."

"It's nae savin' lore," said Andrew, a little troubled that his wife should assert a familiar acquaintance with such things. But she went on.

"Women's jist dreidfu'. Whan ance they gang the ill gait, they're neither to haud nor bin'. And to think o' them layin' han's upo' sic a bonnie weel-behaved laddie as that Alec Forbes, a ceevil, herty cratur, wi' a kin' word an' a joke even for the beggar 'at he gied a bawbee till! Weel, he'll come oot o' their cluiks, maybe no that muckle the waur efter a', as mony a man frae King Dawvid doonwith afore him."

"Noo, wumman!" said Andrew, in a tone of authority blended with rising indignation; "ye're slidin' aff o' yer ain stule, and ye'll be upo' the

grun' afore ye win on to mine. Richt or wrang aboot the women, I bude to ken mair aboot the men nor ye do; and I daur affirm and uphaud that never man cam' oot o' the grip o' thae poor deluded craters—"

Mrs. Constable interposed with one single emphatic epithet, not admittable to the ears of this generation; but Andrew resumed, and went on.

"—poor deluded craters, withoot losin' a great pairt o' what was left in him o' the eemage o' God efter the fall. Woman, he tynes (*loses*) a heap!"

"Hoo sud ye ken onything aboot that, Anerew?" returned his wife sharply.

"The same way that ye ken sae weel aboot the she side o' the queston, lass. We may jist enlichten ane anither a wee aboot some things, mayhap."

Meantime the ears of the little pitcher in bed had been growing longer and longer with curious horror. The something in itself awfully vague about Alec's fate was wrapt in yet deeper clouds of terror and mystery by the discord of opinion with regard to it on the part of her father and mother, whom she had rarely heard differ. She pictured to herself the image of his maker being scratched off Alec by the claws of furies; and hot pincers tearing nail after nail from the hand which had once given her a penny. And her astonish-

ment was therefore paralyzing when she heard her father say :

“But ye maun haud a quaiet tongue i’ yer heid, gudewife ; for weel as ye like the laddie, ye may blast his character gin ye say a word aboot it.”

“Is’ warran’ it ’s a’ ower Glamerton afore it comes to your lugs, Anrew,” returned her mother. “They ’re no that gleg efter sic news. But I wad like sair to ken wha sent hame the word o’ t.”

“I’m thinking it ’s been young Bruce.”

“The Lord be praised for a lee !” exclaimed Mrs. Constable. “Haena I tell’t ye afore noo, sae that it’s no upmak to pick the lock o’ the occasion, Anrew, that Rob Bruce has a spite at that faimily for takin’ sic a heap o’ notice o’ Annie Annerson. And I wadna wonner gin he had set’s hert upo’ merryin’ her upo’ ’s ain Rob, and sae keepin’ her bit siller i’ the faimily. Gin that be sae, he micht weel gie Alec Forbes a back-handit cloot (*blow*).”

“’Deed ! maybe, gudewife. He’s a burnin’ and a shinin’ licht amo’ you missioners, though ; and ye maunna say ill o’ ’m, for fear he has ye up afore the kirk.”

“Ay, deed is he ! He’s a burnin’ shame, and a stinkin’ lamp ; for the grace o’ God wasna hauden to the nib o’ ’m lang eneuch to set him in a low

(*flame*), but only langeneuch to gar the ile o' 'im reek fit to scomfish (*suffocate*) a haill Sodom."

"Hoot, lass! Ye're ower sair even upo' him. But it's verra true that gin' the story cam' frae that en' o' the toon, there's room for rizzonable doobts. Sae we'll awa' to our beds, and houp things mayna be sae far gane as the soun' o' them. Only I drede there's aye some water whaur the stirkie droons."

It was long before little Isie got to sleep, what with attempting to realize the actual condition of Alec Forbes, and trying to excogitate the best means for his deliverance. Why should not all Glamerton set out in a body with flails and pitchforks? And if she must not meddle for that, seeing her father had said the matter must not be mentioned, yet his prohibition could not include Alec's mother, whom it would be wicked to keep in ignorance. For what would Isie think if she was taken prisoner by a cruel woman and they would not tell her mother? So she fell asleep, to wake in the morning with the sense of a mission upon her important little mind.

What rendered it probable that the rumour came from "that end of the town" was, that Bruce the younger was this year a bejan at Alec's college, and besides was the only other scion of Glamerton there grafted, so that any news about Alec



other than he would care to send himself, must in all likelihood have come through him.—For Bruce the elder had determined that in his son he would restore the fallen fortunes of the family, giving him such an education as would entitle him to hold up his head with the best, and especially with that proud upstart, Alec Forbes.

The news had reached Thomas Crann, and filled him with concern. He had, as was his custom in trouble, betaken himself straightway to “the throne of grace,” and “wrestled in prayer” with God that he would restore the prodigal to his mother. What would Thomas have thought if he had been told that his anxiety, genuine as it was, that his love, true as it was, did not come near the love and anxiety of another man who spent his evenings in drinking whisky and reading heathen poets, and who, although he knew not a little of his bible, never opened it from one end of the year to the other? If he had been told that Cosmo Cupples had more than once, after the first tumbler of toddy and before the second, betaken himself to his prayers for his poor Alec Forbes, and entreated God Almighty to do for him what he could not do, though he would die for him—to rescue him from the fearful pit and the miry clay of moral pollution—if he had heard this, he would have said that it was a sad pity, but such prayers



could not be answered, seeing he that prayed was himself in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

There was much shaking of the head amongst the old women. Many an ejaculation and many a meditative *eh me!* were uttered over Alec's fall; and many a word of tender pity for his poor mother floated forth on the frosty air of Glamerton; but no one ventured to go and tell her the dreary tidings. The men left it to the women; and the women knew too well how the bearer of such ill news would appear in her eyes, to venture upon the ungracious task. So they said to themselves she must know it just as well as they did; or if she did not know, poor woman! she would know time enough for all the good it would do her. And that came of sending sons to colleges! &c., &c.

But there was just one not so easily satisfied about the extent of her duties: that was little Isie Constable.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE tertians gave a supper at Luckie Cumstie's, and invited the magistrands. On such an occasion Beauchamp, with his high sense of his own social qualities, would not willingly be absent. When the hour arrived, he took his place near the head of the table.

After all the solid and a part of the liquid entertainment was over, Alec rose in the space between two toasts, and said :

“Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I propose, at my own proper cost, to provide something for your amusement.”

Beauchamp and all stared at the speaker.

“It is to be regretted,” Alec went on, “that students have no court of honour to which to appeal. This is the first opportunity I have had of throwing myself on the generosity of my equals, and asking them to listen to my story.”

The interest of the company was already roused.

All the heads about the long table leaned towards the speaker, and cries of *hear, hear*, arose in all directions. Alec then gave a brief statement of the facts of the encounter upon the bridge. This was the only part of his relations with Beauchamp which he chose to bring before the public; for the greater wrong of lying defamation, involved his cousin's name. He told how Beauchamp had sought the encounter by deliberate insult, had used a weapon against an unarmed enemy, and then thrown him from the bridge.

"Now," he concluded, "all I ask of you, gentlemen, is to allow me the fair arena of your presence while I give this sneaking chieftain the personal chastisement which he has so richly merited at my hands."

Beauchamp had soon recovered his self-possession after the first surprise of the attack. He sat drinking his toddy all the time Alec spoke, and in the middle of his speech he mixed himself another tumbler. When Alec sat down, he rose, glanced round the assembly, bent his lip into its most scornful curves, and, in a clear, unwavering voice, said:

"Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I repel the accusation."

Alec started to his feet in wrath.

"Mr. Forbes, sit down," bawled the chairman;

and Alec obeyed, though with evident reluctance.

“I say the accusation is false,” repeated Beauchamp. “I do not say that Mr. Forbes consciously invented the calumny in order to take away my character: such an assertion would preclude its own credence. Nor do I venture to affirm that he never was stabbed, or thrown into the river. But I ask any gentleman who happens to be aware of Mr. Forbes’s devotions at the shrine of Father Lyaeus, which is the more likely—that a fellow student should stab and throw him into the water, or that, as he was reeling home at midnight, the treacherous divinity of the bowl should have handed him over to the embrace of his brother deity of the river. Why then should even his imagination fix upon me as the source of the injury? Gentlemen, a foolish attachment to the customs of a long line of ancestors has led me into what I find for the first time to be a dangerous habit—that of wearing arms;—dangerous, I mean, to myself; for now I am wounded with my own weapon. But the real secret of the affair is—I am ashamed to say—jealousy. Mr. Forbes knows what I say to be true—that a lady whom he loves prefers me to him.”

“Don’t bring her name in, you brute!” roared Alec, starting again to his feet, “or I’ll tear your tongue out.”

“You hear, gentlemen,” said Beauchamp, and sat down.

A murmur arose. Heads gathered into groups. No one stood up. Alec felt with the deepest mortification that his adversary’s coolness and his own violence had turned the scale against him. This conviction conjoined with the embarrassment of not knowing how to say a word in his own defence without taking some notice of the close of his adversary’s speech, fixed him to his seat. For he had not yet fallen so low as to be capable of even alluding to the woman he loved in such an assembly. He would rather abandon the field to his adversary.

Probably not many seconds had passed, but his situation was becoming intolerable, when a well-known voice rose clear above the confused murmur; and glancing to the lower end of the room, he saw Cosmo Cupples standing at the end of the table.

“I ken weel eneuch, gentlemen,” he said, “that I hae no richt to be here. Ye a’ ken me by the sicht o’ the een. I’m a graduate o’ this university, and at present your humble servant the librarian. I intrude for the sake o’ justice, and I cast mysel’ upo’ your clemency for a fair hearin’.”

This being accorded by general acclamation,

“Gentlemen,” he resumed, “I stan’ afore ye wi’ a sair hert. I hae occupied the position o’ tutor

to Mr. Forbes; for, as Sir Pheelip Sidney says in a letter to his brither Rob, wha was efterwards Yerl o' Leicester upo' the demise o' Robert Dudley, 'Ye may get wiser men nor yersel' to converse wi' ye and instruck ye, in ane o' twa ways—by muckle ootlay or muckle humility.' Noo, that laddie was ane o' the finest naturs I ever cam' across, and his humility jist made it a pleesur to tak' chairge o' 'm baith mentally and morally. That I had a sair doon come whan he took to the drink, I am forced to confess. But I aye thocht he was strauchtforet, notwithstanding the whusky. I wasna prepared for sic a doonfa' as this.—I maun jist confess, Mr. Cheerman, that I heard him throu' the crack o' the door-cheek. And he broucht sic deevilich accusations——"

"Mr. Cupples!" cried Alec.

"Haud yer tongue, Alec Forbes, and lat this company hear me. Ye appealed to the company yersel' first o' a'.—I say hoo cud he bring sic deevilich accusations against a gentleman o' sic birth and breedin' and accomplishments as the Laird o' Chattachan!—Maybe the Laird wad jist condescend to say whaur he was upo' the nicht in question; for gin we cud get the rampaugin' misguidit laddie ance fairly into the yard, wi' the yetts steekit (*gates closed*), he wad see that leein' wadna serve his turn."

Alec was in chaotic confusion. Notwithstanding the hard words Mr. Cupples had used, he could ill believe than he had turned his enemy. He had behaved very badly to Mr. Cupples, but was Mr. Cupples one to revenge himself?

Mr. Cupples had paused with his eyes resting on Beauchamp. He, without rising, replied carelessly:

“Really, sir, I do not keep a register of my goings and comings. I might have done so had I known its importance. I have not even been informed when the occurrence is said to have taken place.”

“I can gie your memory a prod upo’ the dates, sir. For I ken weel the nicht whan Alec Forbes cam’ hame wi’ a lang and a deep cut upo’ the ootside o’ ’s left airm atween the shouther an’ the elbuck. I may weel remember ’t to my grief; for though he cam’ hame as sober as he was drippin’ weet—I hae oor guidwife’s testimony to that—he gaed oot again, and whan he cam’ hame ance mair, he was the waur o’ drink for the first time sin’ ever I kent him. Noo, sir, it a’ took place the same day that ye cam’ to the leebrary, and tuik awa’ wi’ ye a novell ca’d *Aiken Drum*. I tauld ye it wad ill repay ye, for it was but a fule thing. And I remember ’t the better that I was expeckin’ Alec Forbes in ilka minute, and I was feared for a collieshangie (*outbreak*) atween ye.”

“I remember all about that night perfectly, now



you call it to my recollection. I went straight home, and did not go out again—I was so taken up with *Aiken Drum*."

"I tell't ye sae!" cried Cupples, triumphantly. "Wha wadna tak' the word o' The Mac Chatta-chan? There's sma' profit in addin' my testimony to the weight o' that; but I wad jist like to tell this company, Mr. Cheerman and gentlemen, hoo I cam' to ken mair aboot the affair nor my frien' Alec Forbes is awar' o'. That same efternoon, I expeckit him i' the leebrary as I hae said, and whan he didna come, I took my hat—that was about a half-hoor efter the laird left me—and gaed oot to luik for him. I gaed ower the links; for my man had the profitless habit at that time, whilk he's gien up for a mair profitless still, o' stravaguin' aboot upo' the sea-shore, wi' 's han's in 's pooches, and his chin reposin' upo' the third button o' 's waistcoat—all which bears hard upo' what the laird says aboot 's jealousy. The mune was jist risin' by the time I wan to the shore, but I saw no sign o' man or woman alang that dreary coast. I was jist turnin' to come 'hame again, whan I cam' upo' tracks i' the weet san'. And I kent the prent o' the fit, and I followed it on to the links again, and sae I gaed back at my leisure. And it was sic a bonny nicht, though the mune wasna that far up, drivin' lang shaidows afore her, that I thocht I wad jist gang

ance ower the brig and back again, and syne maybe turn into Luckie Cumstie's here. But afore I wan to the brig, whan I was i' the shaidow o' Baillie Bapp's hoose, I heard sic a scushlin' and a shochlin' upo' the brig! and I saw something gang reelin' aboot; and afore I cud gaither my wits and rin foret, I heard an awfu' splash i' the water; and by gangs somebody wi' lang quaiet strides, and never saw me. He had on the kilts, and the lave o' the fandangles. And he turned into the quadrangle, and throu 't he gaed and oot at the corner o' 't. I was close ahint him—that is, I was into the quadrangle afore he was oot o' 't. And I saw the sacrist come oot at the door o' the astronomical tooer, jist afore the Hielanman turned the neuk o' 't. And I said to Thomson, says I, 'Wha was that gaed by ye, and oot the back gait?' And says he, 'It was Maister Beauchamp.' 'Are ye sure o' that?' says I. 'As sure's deith,' says he. Ye ken William's phrase, gentlemen."

Beauchamp's nonchalance had disappeared for some time. When his own name came out, his cheeks grew deathly pale, and thin from the falling of his jaw. Cupples, watching him, went on.

"As sune's I was sure o' my man, I saw what a damned idiot I was to rin efter him. And back I flew to the brig. I kent full weel wha the ither man bude to be. It could be nane but my ain

Alec Forbes ; for I sweir to ye, gentlemen, I hae watched The MacChattachan watchin' Alec Forbes mair nor twa or three times sin' Alec throosh him for bein' foul-mou'd i' the face o' the deid."

By this time, Beauchamp, having swallowed the rest of his tumbler at a gulp, had recovered a little. He rose with defiance on his face.

"Dinna lat him gang, gentlemen," cried Cupples, "till I tell ye ae ither God's trowth.—I ran back to the brig, as hard's my legs cud carry me, consolin' mysel' wi' the reflection that gin Alec had na been sair hurtit i' the scuffle, there was no fear o' him. For I heard him fa' clean into the water, and I kent ye micht as sune droon a herrin' as Alec Forbes. I ran richt to the mids' o' the brig, and there was the black heid o' him bobbin' awa' doon the water i' the hert o' the munelicht. I'm terrible lang-sichtit, gentlemen. I canna sweir that I saw the face o' 'm, seein' the back o' 's heid was to me ; but that it was Alec Forbes, I hae no more doobt than o' my ain existence. I was jist turnin', nearhan' the greetin', for I lo'ed the laddie weel, whan I saw something glintin' bonnie upo' the parapet o' the brig. And noo I beg to restore 't till 'ts richtful owner. Wad ye pass 't up the table, gentlemen. Some o' ye will recogneeze 't as ane o' the laird's bonnie cairngorum-buttons."

Handing the button to the man nearest him,

Mr. Cupples withdrew into a corner, and leaned his back against the wall. The button made many a zigzag from side to side of the table, but Beauchamp saw the yellow gleam of it coming nearer and nearer. It seemed to fascinate him. At last, bursting the bonds of dismay, the blood rushed into his pale face, and he again moved to go :

“A conspiracy, gentlemen!” he cried. “You are all against me. I will not trouble you longer with my presence. I will bide my time.”

“Stop a moment, Mr. Beauchamp,” said the chairman—the pale-faced son of a burly ploughman—rising. “Your departure will scarcely satisfy us now. Gentlemen, form yourselves in a double row, and grace the exit of a disgrace. I leave it to yourselves to kick him or not as you may think proper. But I think myself the way is to be merciful to the confounded. Better leave him to his own conscience.”

Beauchamp’s hand, following its foolish habit, fell upon the hilt of his dirk.

“Draw that dirk one inch,” said the chairman hastily, clenching his fist, “and I’ll have you thrown on Luckie Cumstie’s midden.”

Beauchamp’s hand dropped. The men formed as directed.

“Now,” said the chairman sternly.

And Beauchamp without a word marched down

the long avenue white as a ghost, and looking at nobody. Each made him a low bow as he passed, except the wag of the tertians, who turned his back on him and bowed to the universe in general. Mr. Cupples was next the door, and bowed him out. Alec alone stood erect. He could not insult him.

Beauchamp's feelings I do not care to analyze. As he passes from that room, he passes from my history.—I do not think a man with such an unfavourable start, could arrive at the goal of repentance in this life.

"Mr. Cupples," cried the chairman, "will you oblige us by spending the rest of the evening with us?"

"You do me mair honour nor I deserve, sir," replied Mr. Cupples; "but that villain Alec Forbes has cost me sae muckle in drink to haud my hert up, that I winna drink in his company. I micht tak' ower muckle and disgrace mysel' forbye. Good nicht to ye a', gentlemen, and my best thanks."

So saying, Mr. Cupples left the room before Alec could get near him with a word or a sign of gratitude. But sorry and ashamed as he was, his spirits soon returned. Congratulation restored him to his worse self; and ere long he felt that he had deserved well of the community. The hostess turned him out with the last few at midnight, for one of

the professors was provost; and he went homewards with another student, who also lived in the new town.

The two, however, not having had enough of revelry yet, turned aside into a lane, and thence up a court leading to a low public house, which had a second and worse reputation. Into this Alec's companion went. Alec followed. But he was suddenly seized in the dark, and ejected with violence. Recovering himself from his backward stagger into the court, he raised his arm to strike. Before him stood a little man, who had apparently followed him out of the public house. His hands were in the pockets of his trowsers, and the wind was blowing about the tails of his old dress-coat.

Nor was Alec too far gone to recognize him.

"You, Mr. Cupples!" he exclaimed. "I didna expect to see you here."

"I never was across the door-sill o' sic a place afore," said Mr. Cupples, "nor, please God, will either you or me ever cross sic a door-sill again."

"Hooly, hooly, Mr. Cupples! Speak for ane at a time. I'm gaein in this minute. Luckie Cumstie turned on the caller air ower sune for me."

"Man!" said Cupples, laying hold of Alec's coat, "think that ye hae a mither. Ilka word that ye hear frae a worthless woman is an affront to yer mither."



"Dinna stan' preachin' to me. I'm past that."

"Alec, ye'll wiss to God ye hadna, whan ye come to marry a bonnie wife."

It was a true but ill-timed argument. Alec flared up wildly.

"Wife!" he cried, "there's no wife for me. Haud oot o' my gait. Dinna ye see I hae been drinkin'? And I winna be contred."

"Drinkin'!" exclaimed Mr. Cupples. "Little ye ken aboot drinkin'. I hae drunken three times as muckle as you. And gin that be ony argument for me haudin' oot o' your gait, it's mair argument yet for you to haud oot o' mine. I sweir to God I winna stan' this ony langer. Ye're to come hame wi' me frae this mou' o' hell and ugsome (*frightful*) deith. It gangs straucht to the everlastin' burnin's. Eh man! to think nae mair o' women nor *that*!"

And the brave little man placed himself right between Alec and the door, which now opened half-way, showing several peering and laughing faces.

But the opposition of Mr. Cupples had increased the action of the alcohol upon Alec's brain, and he blazed up in a fury at the notion of being made a laughter to the women. He took one step towards Mr. Cupples, who had restored his hands to his pockets and backed a few paces towards the door of the house, to guard against Alec's passing him.



“Haud oot o’ my gait, or I’ll gar ye,” he said fiercely.

“I will not,” answered Mr. Cupples decisively, and lay senseless on the stones of the court.

Alec strode into the house, and the door closed behind him.

By slow degrees Mr. Cupples came to himself. He was half dead with cold, and his head was aching frightfully. A pool of blood lay on the stones already frozen. He crawled on his hands and knees, till he reached a wall, by which he raised and steadied himself. Feeling along this wall, he got into the street; but he was so confused and benumbed that if a watchman had not come up, he would have died on some doorstep. The man knew him and got him home. He allowed both him and his landlady to suppose that his condition was the consequence of drink; and so was helped up to his garret and put to bed.

## CHAPTER X.

ALL the night during which Isie Constable lay dreaming of racks, pincers, screws, and Alec Forbes, the snow was busy falling outside, shrouding the world once more ; so that next day the child could not get out upon any pretence. Had she succeeded in escaping from the house, she might have been lost in the snow, or drowned in the Glamour, over which there was as yet only a rude temporary bridge to supply the place of that which had been swept away. But although very uneasy at the obstruction of her projects, she took good care to keep her own counsel.—The snow was very obstinate to go. At length, after many days, she was allowed to go out with stockings over her shoes, and play in the garden. No sooner was she alone, than she darted out of the garden by the back-gate, and before her mother missed her, was crossing the Glamour. She had never been so far alone, and felt frightened ; but she pushed bravely forward.

Mrs. Forbes and Annie Anderson were sitting together when Mary put her head in at the door and told her mistress that the daughter of Mr. Constable, the clothier, wanted to see her.

“Why, she’s a mere infant, Mary!” exclaimed Mrs. Forbes.

“Deed is she, mem; but she’s nane the less doon the stair i’ the kitchie. Ye wad hae seen her come yersel’ but she’s ower wee. Ye cudna get a gliimp o’ her ower the edge o’ the snaw i’ the cuttin’ doon to the yett. Hoo her fowk cud lat her oot! She’s a puir wee white-faced elf o’ a crater, but she’s byous auld-farrand and wise-like, and naething will do but she maun see yersel’, mem.”

“Bring her up, Mary. Poor little thing! What can she want?”

Presently Isie entered the room, looking timidly about her.

“Well, my dear, what do you want?”

“It’s about Alec, mem,” said Isie, glancing towards Annie.

“Well, what about him?” asked Mrs. Forbes, considerably bewildered, but not fearing bad news from the mouth of such a messenger.

“Hae ye heard naething aboot him, mem?”

“Nothing particular. I haven’t heard from him for a fortnight.”

“That’s easy accoontit for, mem.”

“What do you mean, my dear? Speak out.”

“Weel, mem, the way I heard it was raither particlar, and I wadna like a’body to ken.”

Here she glanced again at Annie.

“You needn’t be afraid of Annie Anderson,” said Mrs. Forbes smiling. “What is it?”

“Weel, mem, I dinna richtly ken. But they hae ta’en him intil a dreidfu’ place, and whether they hae left a haill inch o’ skin upon’s body, is mair nor I can tell; but they hae rackit him, and pu’d o’ ’s nails aff, maybe them a’, and——”

“Good heavens!” exclaimed Mrs. Forbes, with a most unusual inclination to hysterics, seeing something terrible peep from behind the grotesque report of Isie, “what *do* you mean, child?”

“I’m tellin’ ye’t as I heard it, mem. I houp they haena brunt him yet. Ye maun gang and tak’ him oot o’ their han’s.”

“Whose hands, child? Who’s doing all this to him?”

“They stan’ aboot the corners o’ the streets, mem, in muckle toons, and they catch a haud o’ young laads, and they trail them awa’ wi’ them, and they jist torment the life oot o’ them. They say they’re women; but I dinna believe that. It’s no possible. They maun be men dressed up in women’s claes.”

Was it a great relief to the mother’s heart to find that the childish understanding of Isie had

misinterpreted and misrepresented? She rose and left the room, and her troubled step went to and fro overhead. And the spirit of Annie was troubled likewise. How much she understood, I cannot determine; but I believe that a sense of vague horror and pity overwhelmed her heart. Yet the strength of her kindness forced her to pay some attention to the innocent little messenger of evil.

“Whaur heard ye a’ that, Isie, dear?”

“I heard my father and my mither gaein’ on lamentin’ ower him efter I was i’ my bed, and they thocht I was asleep. But gin Mistress Forbes winna tak’ him awa’, I’ll gang and tell a’ the ministers in Glamerton, and see whether they winna raise the toon.”

Annie stared in amazement at the wee blue-eyed wizened creature before her speaking with the decision of a minor prophet.

“Is the child here still?” said Mrs. Forbes with some asperity as she re-entered the room. “I must go by the mail this afternoon, Annie.”

“That’s richt, mem,” said Isie. “The suner the better, I’m sure. He mayna be deid yet.”

“What a very odd child!” said Mrs. Forbes.

“Wouldn’t it be better to write first, ma’am?” suggested Annie.

Before Mrs. Forbes could reply, the white mutch of Mrs. Constable appeared over the top of the

snow that walled the path. She was in hot pursuit of her child, whose footsteps she had traced. When shown into the dining-room, she rushed up to her, and caught her to her bosom, crying,

“Ye ill-contrived smatchit! What hae ye been about, rinnin’ awa’ this gait? I wonner ye wasna droont i’ the Glamour.”

“I don’t see what better you could expect of your own child, Mrs. Constable, if you go spreading reports against other people’s children,” said Mrs. Forbes bitterly.

“It’s a lee whaever said sae,” retorted Mrs. Constable fiercely. “Wha tell’t ye that?”

“Where else could your child have heard such reports, then?”

“Isie! Isie! My poor wee bairn! What hae ye been about to tak’ awa’ yer mither’s gude name?”

‘And she hugged the child closer yet.

Isie hung down her head, and began to have dim perceptions that she might have been doing mischief with the best possible intentions.

“I only tell’t Mistress Forbes hoo ill they war to Alec.”

After a moment’s reflection, Mrs. Constable turned with a subdued manner to Mrs. Forbes.

“The bairn’s a curious bairn, mem,” she said. “And she’s owerheard her father and me speakin’

thegither as gin't had been only ae body thinkin'. For gin ever twa was ane, that twa and that ane is Andrew Constable and mysel'."

"But what right had you to talk about my son?"

"Weel, mem, that queston gangs raither far. What's already procleemed frae the hoose-taps may surely be spoken i' the ear in closets—for oor back-room is but a closet. Gin ye think that fowk'll haud their tongues about your bairn mair nor ony ither body's bairn, ye're mista'en, mem. But never ane heard o' 't frae me, and I can tak' my bodily aith for my man, for he's jist by ordinar' for haudin' his tongue. I cud hardly worm it oot o' 'in mysel'."

Mrs. Forbes saw that she had been too hasty.

"What does it all mean, Mrs. Constable?" she said, "for I am quite ignorant."

"Ye may weel be that, mem. And maybe there's no a word o' trouth i' the story, for I'm doobtin' the win' that brocht it blew frae an ill airt."

"I really don't understand you, Mrs. Constable. What do they say about him?"

"Ow, jist that he's consortin' wi' the warst o' ill company, mem. But as I said to Anerew, maybe he'll come oot o' their cluiks no that muckle the waur, efter a'."



Mrs. Forbes sank on the sofa, and hid her face in her hands. Annie turned white as death, and left the room. When Mrs. Forbes lifted her head, Mrs. Constable and her strange child had vanished.

Mrs. Forbes and Annie wept together bitterly, in the shadow of death which the loved one cast upon them across the white plains and hills. Then the mother sat down and wrote, begging him to deny the terrible charge ; after which they both felt easier. But when the return of post had brought no reply, and the next day was likewise barren of tidings, Mrs. Forbes resolved to go to the hateful city at once.

## CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Alec woke in the morning, it rushed upon his mind that he had had a terrible dream; and he reproached himself that even in a dream he should be capable of striking to the earth the friend who had just saved him from disgrace, and wanted to save him from more. But as his headache began to yield to cold water, discomposing doubts rose upon his clearing mental horizon. They were absurd, but still they were unpleasant. It *could* be only a dream, that he had felled the man twice his age, and half his size, who had once shed his blood for him. But why did it look so like fact, if it was only a dream? Horrible thought! Could it?—It could—It must be—It was a fact!

Haggard with horror as well as revelry, he rushed towards the stair, but was met by Mrs. Leslie, who stopped him and said:

“Mr. Forbes, gin you and Mr. Cupples gang on

at this rate, I 'll be forced to gie ye baith warnin' to flit. I oucht to hae written to yer mither afore noo. Ye 'll brack her hert or a' be dune. Eh! it's a sair thing whan young lads tak to drink, and turn reprobates in a jiffie (*moment*)."

"I dinna gang to your kirk, and ye needna preach to me. What 's the maitter wi' Mr. Cupples? He hasna ta'en to drink in a jiffie, has he?"

"Ye scorner! He cam hame last nicht bleedin' at the heid, and i' the han's o' the watchman. Puir man! he cud hardly win up the stair. I canna think hoo he cam' to fa' sae sair; for they say there 's a special Providence watches ower drunk men and bairns. He was an awfu' sicht, honest man! A terrible mixter o' reid and white."

"What said he about it?" asked Alec, trembling.

"Ow, naething. He had naething till say. Ye maunna gang near him; for I left him fest asleep. Gang awa benn to yer ain room, and I 'll be in wi' yer brakfast in ten minutes. Eh! but ye wad be a fine lad gin ye wad only gie up the drink and the ill company."

Alec obeyed, ashamed and full of remorse. The only thing he could do was to attend to Mr. Cupples's business in the library, where he worked at the catalogue till the afternoon lecture was over.

Nobody had seen Beauchamp, and the blinds of Kate's windows were drawn down.

All day his heart was full of Mr. Cupples; and as he went home he recalled everything with perfect distinctness, and felt that his conduct had been as vile as it was possible for conduct to be. Because a girl could not love him, he had ceased to love his mother, had given himself up to Satan, and had returned the devotion of his friend with a murderous blow. Because he could not have a bed of roses, he had thrown himself down in the pig-stye. He rushed into a public-house, and swallowed two glasses of whisky. That done, he went straight home, and ran up to Mr. Cupples's room.

Mr. Cupples was sitting before the fire, with his hands on his knees and his head bound in white, bloodstained. He turned a ghastly face, and tried to smile. Alec's heart gave way utterly. He knelt at Mr. Cupples's feet, laid his head on his knee, and burst into very unsaxon but most gracious tears. Mr. Cupples laid a small trembling hand on the boy's head, saying,

"Eh! bantam, bantam!" and could say no more.

"Mr. Cupples," sobbed Alec, "forgive me. I'll cut my throat, gin ye like."

"Ye wad do better to cut the deevil's throat."

“Hoo could I do that? Tell me, and I ’ll do ’t.”

“Wi’ the broken whisky-bottle, man. That ’s at the root o’ a’ the mischeef. It ’s no you. It ’s the drink. And eh! Alec, we micht be richt happy thegither efter that. I wad mak a scholar o’ ye.”

“Weel, Mr. Cupples, ye hae a richt to demand o’ me what ye like; for henceforth ye hae the pooer o’ life or deith ower me. But gin I try to brak throu the drinkin’, I maun haud oot ower frae the smell o’ t; an’ I doobt,” added Alec slyly, “ye wadna hae the chance o’ makin’ muckle o’ a scholar o’ me in that case.”

And now the dark roots of thought and feeling blossomed into the fair flower of resolution.

“Bantam,” said Mr. Cupples solemnly, “I sweir to God, gin ye ’ll gie ower the drink and the lave o’ yer ill gaits, I ’ll gie ower the drink as weel. I hae naething ither to gie ower. But that winna be easy,” he added with a sigh, stretching his hand towards his glass.

From a sudden influx of energy, Alec stretched his hand likewise towards the same glass, and laying hold on it as Mr. Cupples was raising it to his lips, cried:

“I sweir to God likewise.—And noo,” he added, leaving his hold of the glass, “ye daurna drink it.”

Mr. Cupples threw glass and all into the fire.

"That 's my fareweel libation to the infernal Bacchus," he said. "Lat it gang to swall the low o' Phlegethon. But eh! it 's a terrible undertakin'. It 's mair nor Hercules himsel' could hae made onything o'. Bantam! I hae saicrifeesed mysel' to you. Haud to your pairt, or I canna haud to mine."

It was indeed a terrible undertaking. I doubt whether either of them would have had courage for it, had he not been under those same exciting influences—which, undermining all power of manly action, yet give for the moment a certain amount of energy to expend. But the limits are narrow within which, by wasting his capital, a man secures a supply of pocket-money. And for them the tug of war was to come.

They sat on opposite sides of the table and stared at each other. As the spirituous tide ebbed from the brain, more and more painful visions of the near future steamed up. Yet even already conscience began to sustain them. Her wine was strong, and they were so little used to it that it even excited them.

With Alec the struggle would soon be over. His nervous system would speedily recover its healthy operations. But Cupples—from whose veins alcohol had expelled the blood, whose skull

was a Circean cup of hurtful spells—would not delirium follow for him?

Suddenly Alec laid his hand on the bottle. Mr. Cupples trembled. Was he going to break his vow already?

“Wadna ’t be better to fling this into the neist yard, Mr. Cupples?” said Alec. “We daurna fling ’t i’ the fire. It wad set the chimley in a low (*flame*).”

“Na, na. Lat ye ’t sit,” returned Mr. Cupples. (“I wad be clean affrontit gin I cudna see and forbear.”) Ye may jist pit it into the press though. A body needna lay burdens grievous to be borne upo’ himsel’ mair nor upo’ ither fowk. Noo, lat’s hae a game o’ cribbage, to haud’s ohn thocht about it.”

They played two or three games. It was pathetic to see how Mr. Cupples’s right hand, while he looked at the cards in his left, would go blindly flitting about the spot where his glass had always used to stand; and how, when he looked up unable to find it, his face shadowed over with disappointment. After those two or three games, he threw down the cards, saying,

“It winna do, bantam. I dinna like the cairts the nicht. Wi’oot ony thing to weet them, they’re dooms dry. What say ye to a chorus o’ *Æschylus*?”



Alec's habits of study had been quite broken up of late. Even the medical lectures and the hospital-classes had been neglected. So *Æschylus* could not be much of a consolatory amusement in the blank which follows all exorcism. But Cupples felt that if no good spirit came into the empty house, sweeping and garnishing would only entice the seven to take the place of the one. So he tried to interest his pupil once again in his old studies; and by frequent changes did ere long succeed in holding tedium at bay.

But all his efforts would have resulted in nothing but that vain sweeping and garnishing, had not both their hearts been already tenanted by one good and strong spirit—essential life and humanity. That spirit was Love, which at the long last will expel whatsoever opposeth itself. While Alec felt that he must do everything to please Mr. Cupples, he, on his part, felt that all the future of the youth lay in his hands. He forgot the pangs of alcoholic desire in his fear lest Alec should not be able to endure the tedium of abstinence; and Alec's gratitude and remorse made him humble as a slave to the little big-hearted man whom he had injured so cruelly.

"I'm tired and maun gang to my bed, for I hae a sair heid," said Mr. Cupples, that first night.

"That's my doin'!" said Alec, sorrowfully.

“Gin this new repentance o’ yours and mine turns oot to hae ony thing in ’t, we’ll baith hae rizzon to be thankfu’ that ye cloured (*dinted*) my skull, Alec. But eh me! I’m feared I winna sleep muckle the nicht.”

“Wad ye like me to sit up wi’ ye?” asked Alec. “I cud sleep i’ your cheir weel eneuch.”

“Na, na. We hae baith need to say oor prayers, and we cudna do that weel thegither. Gang ye awa’ to yer bed, and min’yer vow to God and to me. And dinna forget yer prayers, Alec.”

Neither of them forgot his prayers. Alec slept soundly—Mr. Cupples not at all.

“I think,” he said, when Alec appeared in the morning, “I winna tak sic a hardship upo’ me anither nicht. Jist open the cat’s door and fling the bottle into somebody’s yard. I houp it winna cut onybody’s feet.

Alec flew to the cupboard, and dragged out the demon.

“Noo,” said Mr. Cupples, “open the twa doors wide, and fling ’t wi’ a birr, that I may hear its last speech and dyin’ declaration.”

Alec did as he was desired, and the bottle fell on the stones of a little court. The clash rose to the ears of Mr. Cupples.

“Thank God!” he said with a sigh.—“Alec, no man that hasna gane throu the same, can tell

what I hae gane throu this past nicht, wi' that deevil i' the press there cryin' 'Come pree (*taste*) me! come pree me!' But I heard and hearkened not. And yet whiles i' the nicht, although I'm sure I didna sleep a wink, I thocht I was fumblin' awa' at the lock o' the press an' cudna get it opened. And the press was a coffin set up upo' its en', an' I kent that there was a corp inside it, and yet I tried sair to open 't. An' syne again, I thocht it was the gate o' Paradees afore which stud the angel wi' the flamin' sword that turned ilka gait, and wadna lat me in. But I'm some better sin the licht cam, and I wad fain hae a drappy o' that fine caller tippie they ca' watter."

Alec ran down and brought it cold from the pump, saying, as Mr. Cupples returned the tumbler with a look of thanks,

"But there's the tappit hen. I doot gin we lea' her i' the press, she'll be wantin' to lay."

"Na, na, nae fear o' that. She's as toom's a cock. Gang and luik. The last drap in her wame flaw oot at the window i' that bottle. Eh! Alec, but I'll hae a sair day, and ye maun be true to me. Gie me my Homer, or I'll never win throu't. An ye may lay John Milton within my rax (*reach*); for I winna pit my leg oot o' the blankets till ye come hame. Sae ye maunna be langer nor ye can help."

Alec promised, and set off with a light heart.

Beauchamp was at none of the classes. And the blinds of Kate's windows were still drawn down.

For a whole week he came home as early as possible and spent the rest of the day with Mr. Cupples. But many dreary hours passed over them both. The suffering of Mr. Cupples and the struggle which he had to sustain with the constant craving of his whole being, are perhaps indescribable; but true to his vow and to his friend, he endured manfully. Still it was with a rueful-comical look and a sigh, sometimes, that he would sit down to his tea, remarking,

“Eh man! this is meeserable stuff—awfu’ weyk tippie—a pagan invention a’thegither.”

But the tea comforted the poor half-scorched, half-sodden nerves notwithstanding, and by slow degrees they began to gather tone and strength; his appetite improved; and at the end of the week he resumed his duties in the library. And thenceforth as soon as his classes were over, Alec would go to the library for Mr. Cupples, or on other days, Mr. Cupples would linger near the medical school or hospital, till Alec came out, and then they would go home together. Once home, both found enough to do in getting one of them up to the mark of the approaching examinations.—Two pale-faced creatures they sat there, in Mr. Cupples’s garret,

looking wretched and subdued enough, although occasionally they broke out laughing, as the sparks of life revived and flickered into merriment.

Inquiring after Miss Fraser, Alec learned that she was ill. The maid inquired in return if he knew anything about Mr. Beauchamp.

## CHAPTER XII.

**M**R. CUPPLES and Alec were hard at work—the table covered with books and papers; when a knock came to the door—the rarest occurrence in that skye region—and the landlady ushered in Mrs. Forbes.

The two men sprang to their feet, and Mrs. Forbes stared with gratified amazement. The place was crowded with signs of intellectual labour, and not even a pack of cards was visible.

“Why didn’t you answer my last letter, Alec?” she said.

It had dropped behind some books, and he had never seen it.

“What is the meaning, then, of such reports about you?” she resumed, venturing to put the question in the presence of Mr. Cupples in the hope of a corroborated refutation.

Alec looked confused, grew red, and was silent. Mr. Cupples took up the reply.

“Ye see, mem, it’s a pairt o’ the edication o’

the human individual, frae the time o' Adam and Eve doonwith, to learn to refuse the evil and chowse the guid. This doesna aye come o' eatin' butter and honey, but whiles o' eatin' aise (*ashes*) and dirt. Noo, my pupil, here, mem, your son, has eaten that dirt and made that chice. And I'll be caution (*security*) for him that he'll never mair return to wallow i' that mire. It's three weeks, mem, sin ae drop o' whusky has passed his mou."

"Whisky!" exclaimed the mother. "Alec! Is it possible?"

"Mem, mem! It wad become ye better to fa' doon upo' yer knees and thank the God that's brocht him oot o' a fearfu' pit and oot o' the miry clay and set his feet upon a rock. But the rock's some sma' i' the fit-haud, and ae word micht jist caw him aff o' 't again. Gin ye fa' to upbraidin' o' 'm, ye may gar him clean forget's washin'."

But Mrs. Forbes was proud, and did not like interference between her and her son. Had she found things as bad as she had expected, she would have been humble. Now that her fears had abated, her natural pride had returned.

"Take me to your own room, Alec," she said.

"Ay, ay, mem. Tak' him wi' ye. But caw cannie, ye ken, or ye'll gie me a deevil o' a job wi' 'm."



With a smile to Cupples, Alec led the way.

He would have told his mother almost everything if she had been genial. As she was, he contented himself with a general confession that he had been behaving very badly, and would have grown ten times worse but for Mr. Cupples, who was the best friend that he had on earth.

"Better than your mother, Alec?" she asked, jealously.

"I was no kith or kin of his, and yet he loved me," said Alec.

"He ought to have behaved more like a gentleman to me."

"Mother, you don't understand Mr. Cupples. He's a strange creature. He takes a pride in speaking the broadest Scotch, when he could talk to you in more languages than you ever heard of, if he liked."

"I don't think he's fit company for you anyhow. We'll change the subject, if you please."

So Alec was yet more annoyed, and the intercourse between mother and son was forced and uncomfortable. As soon as she retired to rest, Alec bounded up stairs again.

"Never mind my mother," he cried. "She's a good woman, but she's vexed with me, and lets it out on you."

"Mind her!" answered Mr. Cupples; "she's a

verra fine woman ; and she may say what she likes to me. She'll be a' richt the morn's mornin'. A woman wi' ae son's like a coo wi' ae horn, some kittle (*ticklish*), ye ken. I cud see in her een haill coal-pits o' affection. She wad dee for ye, afore ye cud say—'Dinna, mither.'"

Next day they went to call on Professor Fraser. He received them kindly, and thanked Mrs. Forbes for her attentions to his niece. But he seemed oppressed and troubled. His niece was far from well, he said—had not left her room for some weeks, and could see no one.

Mrs. Forbes associated Alec's conduct with Kate's illness, but said nothing about her suspicions. After one day more, she returned home, reassured by but not satisfied with her visit. She felt that Alec had outgrown his former relation to her, and had a dim perception that her pride had prevented them from entering upon a yet closer relation. It is their own fault when mothers lose by the *growth* of their children.

## CHAPTER XIII.

MEANTIME, Annie was passing through a strange experience. It gave her a dreadful shock to know that such things were reported of her hero, her champion. They could not be true, else Chaos was come again. But when no exultant denial of them arrived from the pen of his mother, although she wrote as she had promised, then she understood by degrees that the youth had erred from the path, and had denied the Lord that bought him. She brooded and fancied and recoiled till the thought of him became so painful that she turned from it, rather than from him, with discomfort amounting almost to disgust. He had been to her the centre of all that was noble and true. And he revelled in company of which she knew nothing except from far-off hints of unapproachable pollution! Her idol all of silver hue was blackened with the breath of sulphur, and

the world was overspread with the darkness which radiated from it.

In this mood she went to the week-evening service at Mr. Turnbull's chapel. There she sat listless, looking for no help, and caring for none of the hymns or prayers. At length Mr. Turnbull began to read the story of the Prodigal Son. And during the reading her distress vanished like snow in the sunshine. For she took for her own the character of the elder brother, prayed for forgiveness, and came away loving Alec Forbes more than ever she had loved him before. If God could love the Prodigal, might she not, ought she not to love him too?—The deepest source of her misery, though she did not know that it was, had been the fading of her love to him.

And as she walked home through the dark, the story grew into other comfort. A prodigal might see the face of God, then! He was no grand monarch, but a homely father. He would receive her one day, and let her look in his face.

Nor did the trouble return any more. From that one moment, no feeling of repugnance ever mingled with her thought of Alec. For such a one as he could not help repenting, she said. He would be sure to rise and go back to his father. She would not have found it hard to believe even, that, come early, or linger late, no swine-keeping son of the Father will

be able to help repenting at last ; that no God-born soul will be able to go on trying to satisfy himself with the husks that the swine eat, or to refrain from thinking of his father's house, and wishing himself within its walls even in the meanest place ; or that such a wish is prelude to the best robe and the ring and the fatted calf, when the father would spend himself in joyous obliteration of his son's past and its misery—having got him back his very own, and better than when he went, because more humble and more loving.

When Mrs. Forbes came home, she entered into no detail, and was disinclined to talk about the matter at all, probably as much from dissatisfaction with herself as with her son. But Annie's heart blossomed into a quiet delight when she learned that the facts were not so bad as the reports, and that there was no doubt he would yet live them all down.

The evil time was drawing nigh, ushered by gentler gales and snowdrops, when she must be turned out for the spring and summer. She would feel it more than ever, but less than if her aunt had not explained to her that she had a right to the shelter afforded her by the Bruces.

Meantime arrived a letter from Mr. Cupples.

“DEAR MADAM,—After all the efforts of Mr. Alec, aided by my best endeavours, but counter-

acted by the grief of knowing that his cousin, Miss Fraser, entertained a devoted regard for a worthless class-fellow of his—after all our united efforts, Mr. Alec has not been able to pass more than two of his examinations. I am certain he would have done better but for the unhappiness to which I have referred, combined with the illness of Miss Fraser. In the course of a day or two, he will return to you, when, if you can succeed, as none but mothers can, in restoring him to some composure of mind, he will be perfectly able during the vacation to make up for lost time.

“I am, dear madam, your obedient servant,

“COSMO CUPPLES.”

Angry with Kate, annoyed with her son, vexed with herself, and indignant at the mediation of “that dirty vulgar little man,” Mrs. Forbes forgot her usual restraint, and throwing the letter across the table with the words “Bad news, Annie,” left the room. But the effect produced upon Annie by the contents of the letter was very different.

Hitherto she had looked up to Alec as a great strong creature. Her faith in him had been unquestioning and unbounded. Even his wrong-doings had not impressed her with any sense of his weakness. But now, rejected and disgraced, his mother dissatisfied, his friend disappointed, and himself foiled

in the battle of life, he had fallen upon evil days, and all the woman in Annie rose for his defence. In a moment they had changed places in the world of her moral imagination. The strong youth was weak and defenceless: the gentle girl opened the heart almost of motherhood, to receive and shelter the worn outraged man. A new tenderness, a new pity took possession of her. Indignant with Kate, angry with the professors, ready to kiss the hands of Mr. Cupples, all the tenderness of her tender nature gathered about her fallen hero, and she was more like his wife defending him from *her* mother. Now she could be something if not to him yet for him. He had been a "bright particular star" "beyond her sphere," but now the star lay in the grass, shorn of its beams, and she took it to her bosom.

Two days passed. On the third evening, in walked Alec, pale and trembling, evidently ill, too ill to be questioned. His breathing was short and checked by pain.

"If I hadn't come at once, mother," he said, "I should have been laid up there. It's pleurisy, Mr. Cupples says."

"My poor boy!"

"Oh! I don't care."

"You've been working too hard, dear."

Alec laughed bitterly.



"I did work, mother; but it doesn't matter. She's dead."

"Who's dead?" exclaimed his mother.

"Kate's dead. And I couldn't help it. I tried hard. And it's all my fault too. Cupples says she's better dead. But I might have saved her."

He started from the sofa, and went pacing about the room, his face flushed and his breath coming faster and shorter. His mother got him to lie down again, and asked no more questions. The doctor came and bled him at the arm, and sent him to bed.

When Annie saw him worn and ill, her heart swelled till she could hardly bear the aching of it. She would have been his slave, and she could do nothing. She must leave him instead. She went to her room, put on her bonnet and cloak, and was leaving the house when Mrs. Forbes caught sight of her.

"Annie! what *do* you mean, child? You're not going to leave me?"

"I thought you wouldn't want me any more, ma'am."

"You silly child!"

Annie ran back to her room, thus compromising with a strong inclination to dance back to it.

When Mr. Cupples and Alec had begun to place confidence in each other's self-denial, they

cared less to dog each other.—Alec finding at the Natural Philosophy examination that he had no chance, gathered his papers, and leaving the room wandered away to his former refuge when miserable, that long desolate stretch of barren sand between the mouths of the two rivers. Here he wandered till long after the dusk had deepened into night.—A sound as of one singing came across the links, and drew nearer and nearer. He turned in the direction of it, for something in the tones reminded him of Kate; and he almost believed the song was her nurse's ghostly ballad. But it ceased; and after walking some distance inland, he turned again towards the sea. The song rose once more, but now between him and the sea. He ran towards it, falling repeatedly on the broken ground.—By the time he reached the shore, the singing had again ceased, but presently a wild cry came from seawards, where the waves far out were still ebbing from the shore. He dashed along the glimmering sands, thinking he caught glimpses of something white, but there was no moon to give any certainty. As he advanced he became surer, but the sea was between. He rushed in. Deeper and deeper grew the water. He swam. But before he could reach the spot, for he had taken to the water too soon, with another cry the figure vanished, probably in one

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of those deep pits which abound along that shore. Still he held on, diving many times, but in vain. His vigour was not now what it had once been, and at length he was so exhausted, that when he came to himself, lying on his back in the dry sands, he had quite forgotten how he came there. He would have rushed again into the water, but he could scarcely move his limbs. He actually crawled part of the way across the links to the college. There he inquired if Miss Fraser was in the house. The maid assured him that she was in her own room, whereupon he went home. But he had scarcely gone before they discovered that her room was deserted, and she nowhere to be found. The shock of this news rendered it impossible for him to throw off the effects of his exposure. But he lingered on till Mr. Cupples compelled him to go home. Not even then, however, had her body been recovered. Alec was convinced that she had got into one of the quicksands; but it was cast ashore a few days after his departure, and it was well that he did not see it. He did not learn the fact till many years after.

It soon transpired that she had been out of her mind for some time. Indeed rumours of the sort had been afloat before. The proximate cause of her insanity was not certainly known. Some suspicion of the worthlessness of her lover, some

enlightenment as to his perfidy, or his unaccountable disappearance alone, may have occasioned its manifestation. But there is great reason to believe that she had a natural predisposition to it. And having never been taught to provide for her own mental sustenance, and so nourish a necessary independence, she had been too ready to squander the wealth of a rich and lovely nature upon an unworthy person, and the reaction had been madness and death. But anything was better than marrying Beauchamp.

One strange fact in the case was her inexplicable aversion to water—either a crude prevision of her coming fate, or, in the mysterious operations of delirious reasoning, the actual cause of it. The sea, visible from her window over the dreary flat of the links, may have fascinated her, and drawn her to her death. Such cases are not unknown.

During the worst period of Alec's illness, he was ever wandering along that shore, or swimming in those deadly waters. Sometimes he had laid hold of the drowning girl and was struggling with her to the surface. Sometimes he was drawing her in an agony from the swallowing gullet of a quicksand, which held her fast, and swallowed at her all the time that he fought to rescue her from its jawless throat.

Annie took her turn in the sick chamber, watching beside the half-unconscious lad, and listening anxiously to the murmurs that broke through the veil of his dreams. The feeling with which she had received the prodigal home into her heart, spread its roots deeper and wider, and bore at length a flower of a pale-rosy flush—Annie's love revealed to herself—strong although pale, delicate although strong. It seemed to the girl she had loved him so always, only she had not thought about it. He had fought for her and endured for her at school; he had saved her life from the greedy waters of the Glamour at the risk of his own: she would be the most ungrateful of girls if she did not love him.—And she did love him with a quiet intensity peculiar to her nature.

Never had she happier hours than those in which it seemed that only the stars and the angels were awake besides herself. And if while watching him thus at night she grew sleepy, she would kneel down and pray God to keep her awake, lest any harm should befall Alec. Then she would wonder if even the angels could do without sleep always, and fancy them lying about the warm fields of heaven between their own shadowy wings. She would wonder next if it would be safe for God to close his eyes for one minute—safe for the world, she meant; and hope that, if ever he did close his eyes,

that might not be the one moment when she should see his face. Then she would nod, and wake up with a start; flutter silently to her feet, and go and peep at the slumberer. Never was woman happier than Annie was during those blessed midnights and cold grey dawns. Sometimes, in those terrible hours after midnight that belong neither to the night nor the day, but almost to the primeval darkness, the terrors of the darkness would seize upon her, and she would sit "inhabiting trembling." But the lightest movement of the sleeper would rouse her, and a glance at the place where he lay would dispel her fears.

## CHAPTER XIV.

ONE night she heard a rustling amongst the bushes in the garden; and the next moment a subdued voice began to sing :

I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear ;  
At length to me he did incline, my voice and cry to hear.  
He took me from a fearful pit, and from the miry clay,  
And on a rock he set my feet, establishing my way.

The tune was that wildest of trustful wailings—  
*Martyrs’*.

“I didna ken that ye cared aboot psalm-tunes, Mr. Cupples,” murmured Alec.

The singing went on and he grew restless.

It was an *eerie* thing to go out, but she must stop the singing. If it was Mr. Cupples, she could have nothing to fear. Besides, a bad man would not sing that song.—As she opened the door, a soft spring wind blew upon her full of genial strength, as if it came straight from those dark blue clefts



between the heavy clouds of the east. Away in the clear west, the half-moon was going down in dreaming stillness. The dark figure of a little man stood leaning against the house, singing gently.

“Are you Mr. Cupples?” she said.

The man started, and answered,

“Yes, my lass. And wha are ye?”

“I’m Annie Anderson. Alec’s some disturbit wi’ your singin’. Ye’ll wauk him up, and he’ll be a hantle the waur o’ ’t.”

“I winna sing anither stave. It was lanesome stan’in’ upo’ the ootside here, as gin I war ane o’ the foolish virgins.”

“Eh! wadna that be dreidfu’?” responded Annie simply. Her words awoke an echo in Mr. Cupples’s conscience, but he returned no reply.

“Hoo’s Alec?” he asked.

“Some better. He’s growin’ better, though it’s langsome like.”

“And do they lippen you to luik efter him, no?”

“Ay. What for no? His mither wad be worn to deith gin she sat up ilka nicht. He canna bide onybody but her or me.”

“Weel, ye’re a young crater to hae sic a chairge. —I wrote to Mrs. Forbes twa or three times, but I got but ae scrimpit answer. Sae as sune’s I cud win awa’, I cam’ to speir efter him mysel’.”

“Whan did ye come, Mr. Cupples?”

“This nicht. Or I reckon it’s last nicht noo. But or I wan ower this len’t h, ye war a’ i’ yer beds, and I daurna disturb ye. Sae I sat doon in a summer-seat that I cam’ upo’, and smokit my pipe and luikit at the stars and the cluds. And I tried to sing a sang, but naething but psalms wad come, for the nicht’s sae awfu’ solemn, whan ye win richt intil the mids o’ t! It jist distresses me that there’s naebody up to worship God a’ nicht in sic a nicht’s this.”

“Nae doobt there’s mony praisin’ him that we canna see.”

“Ow, ay; nae doobt. But aneath this lift, and breathin’ the houpfu’ air o’ this divine darkness.”

Annie did not quite understand him.

“I maun gang back to Alec,” she said. “Ye’ll come ower the morn, Mr. Cupples, and hear a’ about him?”

“I will do that, my bairn. Hoo do they ca’ ye—for I forget names dreidfu’?”

“Annie Anderson.”

“Ay, ay; Annie Anderson—I hae surely heard that name afore.—Weel, I winna forget *you*, whether I forget yer name or no.”

“But hae ye a bed?” said the thoughtful girl, to whom the comfort of every one who came near her was an instinctive anxiety.

"Ow, ay. I hae a bed at the hoose o' a sma', jabberin', bitter-barkit crater they ca' King Robert the Bruce."

Annie knew that he must be occupying her room ; and was on the point of expressing a hope that he "wadna be disturbit wi' the rottans," when she saw that it would lead to new explanations and delays.

"Good night, Mr. Cupples," she said, holding out her hand.

Mr. Cupples took it kindly, saying :

"Are ye a niece, or a gran'-dochter o' the hoose, or a hired servan', or what are ye?—for ye're a wice-spoken lass and a bonnie."

"I'm a servan' o' the hoose," said Annie. Then after a moment's hesitation, she added, "but no a hired ane."

"Ye 're worth hirin' onyhoo, hinnie (*honey*) ; and they're weel aff that has ye i' the hoose in ony capawcity. An auld man like me may say that to yer face. Sae I'll awa' to my bed, and sing the lave o' my psalm as I gang."

Mr. Cupples had a proclivity to garrets. He could not be comfortable if any person was over his head. He could breathe, he said, when he got next to the stars. For the rats he cared nothing, and slept as if the garret were a cellar in heaven.

It had been a sore trial of his manhood to keep his vow after he knew that Alec was safe in the

haven of a sick-bed. He knew that for him, if he were once happy again, there was little danger of a relapse; for his physical nature had not been greatly corrupted: there had not been time for that. He would rise from his sickness newborn. Hence it was the harder for Mr. Cupples, in his loneliness, to do battle with his deep-rooted desires. He would never drink as he had done, but might he not have just one tumbler?—That one tumbler he did not take. And—rich reward!—after two months the well of song within him began to gurgle and heave as if its waters would break forth once more in the desert; the roseate hue returned to the sunsets; and the spring came in with a very childhood of greenness.—The obfuscations of self-indulgence will soon vanish where they have not been sealed by crime and systematic selfishness.

Another though inferior reward was, that he had money in his pocket: with this money he would go and see Alec Forbes. The amount being small, however, he would save it by walking. Hence it came that he arrived late and weary. Entering the first shop he came to, he inquired after a cheap lodging. For he said to himself that the humblest inn was beyond his means; though probably his reason for avoiding such a shelter was the same as made him ask Alec to throw the bottle out of the

garret. Robert Bruce heard his question, and, regarding him keenly from under his eyebrows, debated with himself whether the applicant was respectable—that is, whether he could pay, and would bring upon the house no discredit by the harbourage. The signs of such a man as Cupples were inscrutable to Bruce; therefore his answer hung fire.

“Are ye deif, man?” said Cupples; “or are ye feared to tyne a chance by giein’ a fair answer to a fair queston?”

The arrow went too near the mark not to irritate Bruce.

“Gang yer wa’s,” said he. “We dinna want tramps i’ this toon.”

“Weel, I am a tramp, nae doobt,” returned Cupples; “for I hae come ilka bit o’ the road upo’ my ain fit; but I hae read in history o’ twa or three tramps that war respectable fowk for a’ that. Ye winna gie onything i’ this chop, I doobt—nae even information.—Will ye *sell* me an unce o’ pigtail?”

“Ow, ay. I’ll sell ’t gin ye’ll buy ’t.”

“There’s the bawbees,” said Cupples, laying the orthodox pence on the counter. “And noo will ye tell me whaur I can get a respectable, dacent place to lie doon in? I’ll want it for a week, at ony rate.”

Before he had finished the question, the door

behind the counter had opened, and young Bruce had entered. Mr. Cupples knew him well enough by sight as a last year's bejan.

"How are you?" he said. "I know you, though I don't know your name."

"My name's Robert Bruce, Mr. Cupples."

"A fine name—Robert Bruce," he replied.

The youth turned to his father, and said—

"This gentleman is the librarian of our college, father."

Bruce took his hat off his head, and set it on the counter.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said. "I'm terrible short-sichtit in can'le-licht."

"I'm used to bein' mista'en'," answered Cupples simply, perceiving that he had got hold of a character. "Mak nae apologies, I beg ye, but answer my queston."

"Weel, sir, to tell the trowth, seein' ye're a gentleman, we hae a room oorsels. But it's a garret-room, and maybe——"

"Then I'll hae 't, whatever it be, gin ye dinna want ower muckle for't."

"Weel, ye see, sir, your college is a great expense to heumble fowk like oorsels, and we hae to mak it up the best way that we can."

"Nae doot. Hoo muckle do ye want?"

"Wad ye think five shillins ower muckle?"

“’Deed wad I.”

“Weel, we’ll say three than—to *you*, sir.”

“I winna gie ye mair nor half-a-croon.”

“Hoot, sir! It’s ower little.”

“Well, I’ll look further,” said Mr. Cupples, putting on English, and moving to the door.

“Na, sir; ye’ll do nae sic thing. Do ye think I wad lat the leebrarian o’ my son’s college gang oot at my door this time o’ nicht, to luik for a bed till himsel’? Ye s’ jist hae ’t at yer ain price, and welcome. Ye’ll hae yer tay and sugar and bitties o’ cheese frae me, ye ken?”

“Of course—of course. And if you could get me some tea at once, I should be obliged to you.”

“Mother,” cried Bruce, through the house-door, and held a momentary whispering with the partner of his throne.

“So your name’s Bruce, is it?” resumed Cupples, as the other returned to the counter.

“Robert Bruce, sir, at your service.”

“It’s a gran’ *name*,” said Cupples with emphasis.

“’Deed is’t, and I hae a richt to beir ’t.”

“Ye’ll be a descendant, nae doot, o’ the Yerl o’ Carrick?” said Cupples, guessing at his weakness.

“O’ the king, sir. Fowk may think little o’ me; but I come o’ him that freed Scotland. Gin it hadna been for Bannockburn, sir, whaur wad Scotland hae been the day?”



“Nearhan’ civileezed unner the fine influences o’ the English, wi’ their cultivation and their mainners, and, aboon a’, their gran’ Edwards and Hairries.”

“I dinna richtly unnerstan’ ye, sir,” said Bruce. “Ye hae heard hoo the king clave the skull o’ Sir Henry dee Bo-hunn—haena ye, sir?”

“Ow, aye. But it was a pity it wasna the ither gait. Lat me see the way to my room, for I want to wash my han’s and face. They’re jist barkit wi’ stour (*dust*).”

Bruce hesitated whether to show Mr. Cupples out or in. His blue blood boiled at this insult to his great progenitor. But a half-crown would cover a greater wrong than that even, and he obeyed. Cupples followed him up stairs, murmuring to himself:

“Shades o’ Wallace and Bruce! forgie me. But to see sma’ craters cock their noses and their tails as gin they had inherited the mighty deeds as weel as the names o’ their forbears, jist scunners me, and turns my blude into the gall o’ bitterness—and that’s scripter for ’t.”

After further consultation, Mr. and Mrs. Bruce came to the conclusion that it might be politic, for Robert’s sake, to treat the librarian with consideration. Consequently Mrs. Bruce invited him to go down to his tea in *the room*. Descending

before it was quite ready, he looked about him. The only thing that attracted his attention was a handsomely bound bible. This he took up, thinking to get some amusement from the births of the illustrious Bruces; but the only inscription he could find, besides the name of *John Cowie*, was the following in pencil:

*“Super Davidis Psalmum tertium vicesimum, syngrapham pecuniariam centum solidos valentem, quæ, me mortuo, a Annie Anderson, mihi dilecta, sit, posui.”*

Then came some figures, and then the date, with the initials *J. C.*

Hence it was that Mr. Cupples thought he had heard the name of Annie Anderson before.

“It’s a gran’ bible this, gudewife,” he said as Mrs. Bruce entered.

“Aye is’t. It belanged to oor pairis-minister.”

Nothing more passed, for Mr. Cupples was hungry.

After a long sleep in the morning, he called upon Mrs. Forbes, and was kindly received; but it was a great disappointment to him to find that he could not see Alec. As he was in the country, however, he resolved to make the best of it, and enjoy himself for a week. For his asserted dislike to the country, though genuine at the time, was anything but natural to him. So every day

he climbed to the top of one or other of the hills which inclosed the valley, and was rewarded with fresh vigour and renewed joy. He had not learned to read Wordsworth; yet not a wind blew through a broom-bush, but it blew a joy from it into his heart. He too was a prodigal returned at least into *the vestibule* of his father's house. (And the father sent the servants out there to minister to him;) and Nature, the housekeeper, put the robe of health upon him, and gave him new shoes of strength, and a ring, though not the father's white stone. The delights of those spring days were endless to him whose own nature was budding with new life. Familiar with all the cottage ways, he would drop into any *hoosie* he came near about his dinner-time, and asking for a *piece* (of oat-cake) and a *cogie o' milk*, would make his dinner off those content, and leave a trifle behind him in acknowledgment. But he would always contrive that as the gloamin began to fall, he should be near Howglen, that he might inquire after his friend. And Mrs. Forbes began to understand him better.—Before the week was over, there was not a man or woman about Howglen whom he did not know even by name; for to his surprise, even his forgetfulness was fast vanishing in the menstruum of the earth-spirit, the world's breath blown over the corn. In particular he had made the acquaint-

ance of James Dow, with whose knowing simplicity he was greatly taken.

On the last day but one of his intended stay, as he went to make his daily inquiry, he dropped in to see James Dow in the "harled hypocrite." James had come in from his work, and was sitting alone on a bench by the table, in a corner of the earth-floored kitchen. The great pot, lidless, and full of magnificent potatoes, was hanging above the fire, that its contents might be quite dry for supper. Through the little window, a foot and a half square, Cupples could see the remains of a hawthorn hedge, a hundred years old—a hedge no longer, but a row of knobby, gnarled-trees, full of knees and elbows; and through the trees the remains of an orange-coloured sunset.—It was not a beautiful country, as I have said before; but the spring was beautiful, and the heavens were always beautiful; and, like the plainest woman's face, the country itself, in its best moods, had no end of beauty.

"Hoo are ye, Jeames Doo?"

"Fine, I thank ye, sir," said James rising.

"I wad raither sit doon mysel', nor gar you stan' up efter yer day's work, Jeames."

"Ow! I dinna warstle mysel' to the deith a'the-gither."

But James, who was not a healthy man, was

often in the wet field when another would have been in bed, and righteously in bed. He had a strong feeling of the worthlessness of man's life in comparison with the work he has to do, even if that work be only the spreading of a fother of dung. His mistress could not keep him from his work.

Mr. Cupples sat down, and James resumed his seat.

"Ye're awfu' dubby (*miry*) aboot the feet, Mr. Cupples. Jist gie me aff yer shune, and I'll gie them a scrape and a lick wi' the blackin'-brush," said James, again rising.

"Diel tak' me gin I do ony sic thing!" exclaimed Mr. Cupples. "My shune'll do weel eneuch."

"Whaur got ye a' that dub, sir? The roads is middlin' the day."

"I dinna aye stick to the roads, Jeames. I wan intil a bog first, and syne intil some ploed lan' that was a' lumps o' clay shinin' green i' the sun. Sae it's nae wonner gin I be some clortit. Will ye gie me a pitawta, Jeames, in place o' the blackin'-brush?"

"Ay, twenty. But winna ye bide till Mysie comes in, and hae a drappy milk wi' them? They're fine pitawtas the year."

"Na, na, I haena time."

"Weel, jist dip into the pot, and help yersel', sir; and I'll luik for a grainy o' saut."

“Hoo’s yer mistress, Jeames? A fine woman that!”

“Nae that ill, but some forfochten wi’ norsin’ Mr. Alec. Eh! sir, that’s a fine lad, gin he wad only haud steady.”

“I’m thinkin’ he winna gang far wrang again. He’s gotten the arles (*earnest*) and he winna want the wages.—That’s a fine lassie that’s bidin’ wi’ them—Annie Anderson they ca’ her.”

“’Deed is she, sir. I kent her father afore her day, and I hae kent her sin ever she had a day. She’s ane o’ the finest bairns ever was seen.”

“Is she ony relation to the mistress?”

“Ow, na. Nae mair relation nor ’at a’ gude fowk’s sib.”

And Dow told Cupples the girl’s story, including the arrangement made with Bruce, in which he had had a principal part.

“*Annie Anderson*—I canna mak’ oot whaur I hae heard her name afore.”

“Ye’re bidin’ at Bruce’s, arena ye, Mr. Cupples?”

“Ay. That is, I’m sleepin there, and payin’ for ’t.”

“Weel, I hae little doobt ye hae heard it there.”

“I dinna think it. But maybe.—What kin’ o’ a chiel’s Bruce?”

“He’s terrible greedy.”

"A moudiwarp (*mole*) wi' ae ee wad see that afore he had winkit twice."

"'Deed nicht he."

"Is he honest?"

"That's hard to answer. But I s' gar him be honest wi' regaird to her, gin I can."

"Wad he chait?"

"Ay. Na. He wadna chait *muckle*. I wadna turn my back till him, though, ohn keekit ower my shouther to haud him sicker. He wadna min' doin' ill that gude nicht come."

"Ay, ay; I ken him.—And the *ill* wad be whatever hurtit anither man, and the *gude* whatever furthered himsel?" said Mr. Cupples as he dipped the last morsel of his third potato in the salt which he held in the palm of his left hand.

"Ye hae said it, Mr. Cupples."

And therewith, Mr. Cupples bade James good night, and went to *the hoose*.

There he heard the happy news that Alec insisted on seeing him. Against her will, Mrs. Forbes had given in, as the better alternative to vexing him. The result of the interview was, that Cupples sat up with him that night, and Mrs. Forbes and Annie both slept. In the morning he found a bed ready for him, to which he reluctantly betook himself and slept for a couple of hours. The end of it was, that he did not go back to Mr.



Bruce's except to pay his bill. Nor did he leave Howglen for many weeks.

At length, one lovely morning, when the green corn lay soaking in the yellow sunlight, and the sky rose above the earth deep and pure and tender like the thought of God about it, Alec became suddenly aware that life was good, and the world beautiful. He tried to raise himself, but failed. Cupples was by his side in a moment. Alec held out his hand with his old smile so long disused. Cupples propped him up with pillows, and opened the window that the warm waves of the air might break into the cave where he had lain so long deaf to its noises and insensible to its influences. The tide flowed into his chamber like Pactolus, all golden with sunbeams. He lay with his hands before him and his eyes closed, looking so happy that Cupples gazed with reverent delight, for he thought he was praying. But he was only blessed. So easily can God make a man happy ! The past had dropped from him like a wild but weary and sordid dream. He was reborn, a new child, in a new bright world, with a glowing summer to revel in. One of God's lyric prophets, the larks, was within earshot, pouring down a vocal summer of jubilant melody. The lark thought nobody was listening but his wife ; but God heard in heaven, and the young prodigal heard on the earth. He

would be a good child henceforth, for one bunch of sunrays was enough to be happy upon. His mother entered. She saw the beauty upon her boy's worn countenance; she saw the noble watching love on that of his friend; her own filled with light, and she stood transfixed and silent. Annie entered, gazed for a moment, fled to her own room, and burst into adoring tears.—For she had seen the face of God and that face was Love—love like the human, only deeper, deeper—tenderer, lovelier, stronger. She could not recall what she had seen, or how she had known it; but the conviction remained that she had seen his face, and that it was infinitely beautiful.

“He has been wi’ me a’ the time, my God! He gied me my father, and sent Broonie to tak’ care o’ me, and Dooie, and Thomas Crann, and Mrs. Forbes, and Alec. And he sent the cat whan I gaed till him about the rottans. An’ he ’s been wi’ me I kenna hoo lang, and he’s wi’ me noo. And I hae seen his face, and I’ll see his face again. And I’ll try sair to be a gude bairn. Eh me! It’s jist wonnerfu! And God’s jist . . . naething but God himsel’.”

## CHAPTER XV.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Cupples had been educated for the Church, and was indeed at this present time a licentiate, he had given up all thought of pursuing what had been his mother's ambition rather than his own choice. But his thoughts had not ceased to run in some of the old grooves, although a certain scepticism would sometimes set him examining those grooves to find out whether they had been made by the wheels of the gospel-chariot, or by those of Juggernaut in the disguise of a Hebrew high priest, drawn by a shouting Christian people. Indeed, as soon as he ceased to go to church, which was soon after ceasing to regard the priesthood as his future profession, he began to look at many things from points of view not exclusively ecclesiastical. So that, although he did go to church at Glamerton for several Sundays, the day arriving when he could not face it again, he

did not scruple to set off for the hills. Coming home with a great grand purple fox-glove in his hand, he met some of the missionars returning from their chapel, and amongst the rest Robert Bruce, who stopped and spoke.

“I’m surprised to see ye carryin’ that thing o’ the Lord’s day, Mr. Cupples. Fowk’ll think ill o’ ye.”

“Weel, ye see, Mr. Bruce, it angert me sae to see the ill-faured thing positeevly growin’ there upo’ the Lord’s day, that I pu’d it up ’maist by the reet. To think o’ a weyd like that prankin’ itsel’ oot in its purple and its spots upo’ the Sawbath day! It canna ken what it’s aboot. I’m only feared I left eneuch-o’ ’t to be up again afore lang.”

“I doobt Mr. Cupples ye haena come unner the pooer o’ grace yet.”

“A pour o’ creysh (*grease*)! Na, thank ye. I dinna want to come unner a pour o’ creysh. It wad blaud me a’thegither. Is that the gait ye baptize i’ your conventicle?”

“There’s nane sae deif’s them ’at winna hear, Mr. Cupples,” said Bruce. “I mean—ye ’re no convertit yet.”

“Na. I’m no convertit. ’Deed no. I wadna like to be convertit. What wad ye convert me till? A swine? Or a sma’ peddlin’ crater that tak’s a bawbee mair for rowin’ up the pigtail in a

foul paper? Ca' ye that conversion? I'll bide as I am."

"It's waste o' precious time speikin' to you, Mr. Cupples," returned Bruce, moving off with a red face.

"'Deed is 't," retorted Cupples; "and I houp ye winna forget the fac'? It's o' consequens to me."

But he had quite another word on the same subject for Annie Anderson, whom he overtook on her way to Howglen—she likewise returning from the missionar kirk.

"Isna that a bonnie ring o' *deid man's bells*, Annie?" said he, holding out the foxglove, and calling it by its name in that part of the country.

"Ay is 't. But that was ower muckle a floer to tak' to the kirk wi' ye. Ye wad gar the fowk lauch."

"What's the richt floer to tak' to the kirk, Annie?"

"Ow! sober floories that smell o' the yird (*earth*), like."

"Ay! ay! Sic like 's what?" asked Cupples, for he had found in Annie a poetic nature that delighted him.

"Ow! sic like 's thyme and southren-wood, and maybe a bittie o' mignonette."

"Ay! ay! And sae the cowmon custom

abuses you, young, bonnie lammies o' the flock. Wadna ye tak' the rose o' Sharon itsel', nor the fire-reid lilies that made the text for the Saviour's sermon? Ow! na. Ye maun be sober, wi' flooers bonnie eneuch, but smellin' o' the kirkyaird raither nor the blue lift, which same's the sapphire throne o' Him that sat thereon."

"Weel, but allooin' that, ye sudna gar fowk lauch, wi' a bonnie flooer, but ridickleous for the size o' 't, 'cep' ye gie 't room. A kirk's ower little for 't."

"Ye're richt there, my dawtie. And I haena been to the kirk ava'. I hae been to the hills."

"And what got ye there?"

"I got this upo' the road hame."

"But what got ye there?"

"Weel, I got the blue lift."

"And what was that to ye?"

"It *said* to me that I was a foolish man to care aboot the claiks and the strifes o' the warl'; for a' was quaiet aboon, whatever stramash they might be makin' doon here i' the cellars o' the speeritual creation."

Annie was silent: while she did not quite understand him, she had a dim perception of a grand meaning in what he said. The fact was that Annie was the greater of the two *in esse*; Cupples the greater *in posse*. His imagination let

him see things far beyond what he could for a long time attain unto.

“But what got ye at the kirk, Annie?”

“Weel, I canna say I got verra muckle the day. Mr. Turnbull’s text was, ‘Thou Lord art merciful, for thou renderest to every man according to his works.’”

“Ye might hae gotten a hantel oot o’ that.”

“Ay. But ye see, he said the Lord was merciful to ither fowk whan he rendert to the wicked the punishment due to them. And I cudna richtly feel i’ my hert that I cud praise the Lord for that mercy.”

“I dinna wonner, my bairn.”

“But eh! Mr. Cupples, Mr. Turnbull’s no like that aye. He’s bonnie upo’ the Gospel news. I wiss ye wad gang and hear him the nicht. I canna gang, cause Mrs. Forbes is gaun oot.”

“I’ll gang and hear him, to please you, my lassie; for, as I said, I haena been to the kirk the day.”

“But do ye think it’s richt to brak the Sawbath, Mr. Cupples?”

“Ay and no.”

“I dinna unnerstan’ ye.”

“What the clergy ca’ brakin’ the Sawbath’s no brakin’ o’ t. I’ll tell ye what seems to me the differ atween the like o’ your Mr. Turnbull and



the Pharisees—and it's a great differ. They band heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and laid them upo' men's shouthers, but wadna touch sic like to carry them wi' ane o' their fingers: Mr. Turnbull and the like o' him beirs their share. But the burden's nane the less a heavy ane and grievous to be borne." *with long sermons*

"But the burden's no—that grievous to me, Mr. Cupples."

"There's no sayin' what you women-fowk will *not* tak' a pleesur' in bearin'; but the passage refers expressly to the men's shouthers. And faith mine *will* not endure to be loadent wi' ither fowks fykes (*trifles*). And sae come alang, deid man's bells."

Annie thought all this rather dreadful, but she was not shocked as a Christian who lives by the clergy and their traditions, instead of by the fresh spirit of God, would have been. For she could not help seeing that there was truth in it.

But although Cupples could say much to set Annie thinking, and although she did find enlightenment at last from pondering over his words, yet she could have told him far deeper things than he had yet suspected to exist. For she knew that the goal of all life is the face of God. Perhaps she had to learn a yet higher lesson: that our one free home is the Heart, the eternal lovely Will of

God, than that which should fail, it were better that we and all the worlds should go out in blackness. But this Will is our Salvation. Because He liveth we shall live also.

Mr. Cupples found in the missionar kirk a certain fervour which pleased him. For Mr. Turnbull finding that his appeals to the ungodly were now of little avail to attract listeners of the class, had betaken himself to the building up of the body of Christ, dwelling in particular upon the love of the brethren. But how some of them were to be loved except with the love of compassionate indignation, even his most rapt listener Thomas Crann could not have supposed himself capable of explaining. As I said, however, Mr. Cupples found the sermon in some degree impressive, and was attentive. As he was walking away, questioning with himself, he heard a voice in the air above him. It came from the lips of Thomas Crann, who, although stooping from asthma and rheumatism, still rose nearly a foot above the head of Mr. Cupples.

“I was glaid to see ye at oor kirk, sir,” said Thomas.

“What for that?” returned the librarian, who always repelled first approaches, in which he was only like Thomas himself, and many other worthy people, both Scotch and English.

“A stranger sud aye be welcomed to onybody’s hoose.”

“I didna ken it was your hoose.”

“Ow na. It’s no my hoose. It’s the Lord’s hoose. But a smile frae the servan’-lass that opens the door’s something till a man that gangs to ony hoose for the first time, ye ken,” returned Thomas, who, like many men of rough address, was instantly put upon his good behaviour by the exhibition of like roughness in another.

This answer disarmed Cupples. He looked up into Thomas’s face, and saw first a massive chin; then a firmly closed mouth; then a nose, straight as a Greek’s, but bulky and of a rough texture; then two keen grey eyes, and lastly a big square forehead supported by the two pedestals of high cheek bones—the whole looking as if it had been hewn out of his professional granite, or rather as if the look of the granite had passed into the face that was so constantly bent over it fashioning the stubborn substance to the yet more stubborn human will. And Cupples not only liked the face, but felt that he was in the presence of one of the higher natures of the world—made to command, or rather, which is far better, to influence. Before he had time to reply, however, Thomas resumed:

“Ye hae had a heap o’ tribble I doobt, wi’ that laddie, Alec Forbes.”

“Naething mair nor was nateral,” answered Cupples.

“He’s a fine crater, though. I ken that weel. Is he come back, do ye think?”

“What do ye mean? He’s lyin’ in’s bed, quaiet eneuch, puir fallow!”

“Is he come back to the fold?”

“Nae to the missionars, I’m thinkin’.”

“Dinna anger me. Ye’re nae sae ignorant as ye wad pass for. Ye ken weel eneuch what I mean. What care I for the missionars mair nor ony ither o’ the Lord’s fowk, ’cep that they’re mair like his fowk nor ony ither that I hae seen?”

“Sic like’s Robert Bruce, for a sample.”

Thomas stopped, as if he had struck against a stone wall, and went back on his track.

“What I want to ken is whether Alec unnerstans yet that the prodigal’s aye ill aff; and——”

“Na,” interrupted Cupples. “He’s never been cawed to the swine yet. Nor he sudna be, sae lang’s I had a saxpence to halve wi’ him.”

“Ye’re no richt, frien’, *there*. The suner a prodigal comes to the swine the better!”

“Ay; that’s what you richteous elder brithers think. I ken that weel eneuch.”

“Mr. Cupples, I’m nae elder brither i’ that sense. God kens I wad gang oot to lat him in.”

“What ken ye aboot him, gin it be a fair question?”

“I hae kent him, sir, sin he was a bairn. I perilled his life—no my ain—to gar him do his duty. I trust in God it wad hae been easier for me to hae perilled my ain. Sae ye see I do ken aboot him.”

“Weel,” said Mr. Cupples, to whom the nature of Thomas had begun to open itself, “I alloo that. Whaur do ye bide? What ’s yer name? I’ll come and see ye the morn’s nicht, gin ye’ll lat me.”

“My name ’s Thomas Crann. I’m a stonemason. Speir at Robert Bruce’s chop, and they’ll direc ye to whaur I bide. Ye may come the morn’s nicht, and welcome. Can ye sup parritch?”

“Ay, weel that.”

“My Jean ’s an extrornar han’ at parritch. I only houp puir Esau had half as guid for ’s birthricht. Ye’ll hae a drappy wi’ me?”

“Wi’ a’ my hert,” answered Cupples.

And here their ways diverged.

When he reached home, he asked Annie about Thomas. Annie spoke of him in the highest terms, adding,

“I’m glaid ye like him, Mr. Cupples.”

“I dinna think, wi’ sic an opingon o’ ’m, it can maitter muckle to you whether I like him or no,”

returned Mr. Cupples, looking at her quizzically.

“Na, nae muckle as regairds him. But it says weel for you, ye ken, Mr. Cupples,” replied Annie archly.

Mr. Cupples laughed good-humouredly, and said,

“Weel, I s’ gang and see him the morn’s nicht, ony gait.”

And so he did. And the porridge and the milk were both good.

“This is heumble fare, Mr. Cupples,” said Thomas.

“It maitters little compairateevly what a man lives upo’,” said Cupples sententiously, “sae it be first rate o’ ’ts ain kin’. And this *is* first-rate.”

“Tak’ a drappy mair, sir.”

“Na, nae mair, I thank ye.”

“They’ll be left, gin ye dinna.”

“Weel, sen’ them ower to Mr. Bruce,” said Cupples, with a sly wink. “I s’ warran’ he’ll coup them ower afore they sud be wastit. He canna bide waste.”

“Weel, that’s a vertue. The Saviour himsel’ garred them gaither up the fragments.”

“Nae doobt. But I’m feared Bruce wad hae coontit the waste by hoo mony o’ the baskets gaed by his door. I’m surprised at ye, Mr. Crann,

tryin' to defen' sic a meeserable crater, jist 'cause he gangs to your kirk."

"Weel, he is a meeserable crater, and I canna bide him. He's jist a Jonah in oor ship, an Achan in oor camp. But I sudna speyk sae to ane that's no a member."

"Never ye min'. I'm auld eneuch to hae learned to haud my tongue. But we'll turn till a better subjec'. Jist tell me hoo ye made Alec peril's life for conscience sake. Ye dinna burn fowk here for nae freely haudin' by the shorter Carritchis, do ye?"

And hereupon followed the story of the flood.

Both these men, notwithstanding the defiance they bore on their shields, were of the most friendly and communicative disposition. So soon as they saw that a neighbour was trustworthy, they trusted him. Hence it is not marvellous that communication should have been mutual. Cupples told Thomas in return how he had come to know Alec, and what compact had arisen between them. Thomas, as soon as he understood Mr. Cupples's sacrifice, caught the delicate hand in his granite grasp—like that with which the steel anvil and the stone block held Arthur's sword—and said solemnly,

"Ye hae done a great deed, which winna gang wantin' its reward. It canna hae merit, but it maun be plesant in His sicht. Ye hae baith



conquered sin i' yersel, and ye hae turned the sinner frae the error o' his ways."

"Hoots!" interrupted Cupples, "do ye think I was gaun to lat the laddie gang reid-wud to the deevil, ohn stud in afore 'm and cried *Hooly!*"

After this the two were friends, and met often. Cupples went to the missionars again and again, and they generally walked away together.

"What gart ye turn frae the kirk o' yer fathers, and tak to a conventicle like that, Thomas?" asked Mr. Cupples one evening.

"Ye hae been to them baith, and I wad hae thocht ye wad hae kent better nor to speir sic a question," answered Thomas.

"Ay, ay. But what gart ye think o' 't first?"

"Weel, I 'll tell ye the haill story. Whan I was a callan, I took the play to mysel' for a week or maybe twa, and gaed wi' a frien' i' the same trade 's mysel', to see what was to be seen alang a screed o' the sea-coast, frae toon to toon. My compaingon wasna that gude at the traivellin'; and upo' the Setterday nicht, there we war in a public hoose, and him no able to gang ae fit further, for sair heels and taes. Sae we bude to bide still ower the Sawbath, though we wad fain hae been oot o' the toon afore the kirk began. But seein' that we cudna, I thocht it wad be but dacent to gang to the kirk like ither fowk, and sae I made mysel' as

snod as I could, and gaed oot. And afore I had gane mony yairds, I cam upo' fowk gaein to the kirk. And sae I loot the stream carry me along wi' 't, and gaed in and sat doon, though the place wasna exackly like a kirk a'thegither. But the minister had a gift o' prayer and o' preaching as weel; and the fowk a' sang as gin 't was pairt o' their business to praise God, for fear he wad tak it frae them and gie 't to the stanes. Whan I cam oot, and was gaein quaietly back to the public, there cam first ae sober-luikin man up to me, and he wad hae me hame to my denner; and syne their cam an auld man, and efter that a man that luikit like a sutor, and ane and a' o' them wad hae me hame to my denner wi' them—for no airthly rizzon but that I was a stranger. But ye see I cudna gang 'cause my frien' was waitin for his till I gaed back. Efter denner, I speirt at the landlady gin she cud tell me what they ca'd themsels, the fowk 'at gathered i' that pairt o' the toon; and says she, 'I dinna ken what they ca' them—they 're nae customers o' mine—but I jist ken this, they 're hard-workin' fowk, kind to ane anither. A'body trusts their word. Gif ony o' them be sick, the rest luiks efter them till they 're better; and gin ony o' them happens to gang the wrang gait, there's aye three or four o' them about him, till they get him set richt again.' 'Weel,' says I,

‘I dinna care what they ca’ them ; but gin ever I jine ony kirk, that s’ be the kirk.’ Sae, efter that, whan ance I had gotten a sure houp, a rael grun’ for believin’ that I was ane o’ the called and chosen, I jist jined mysel’ to them that sud be like them—for they ca’d them a’ Missionars.”

“Is that lang sin syne?”

“Ay, it’s twenty year noo.”

“I thocht as muckle. I doobt they hae fared like maist o’ the new fashions.”

“Hoo that?”

“Grown some auld themsel’s. There’s a feow signs o’ decrepitude, no to say degeneracy, amo’ ye, isna there?”

“I maun alloo that. At the first, things has a kin’ o’ a swing that carries them on. But the sons an’ the dochters dinna care sae muckle aboot them as the fathers and mithers. Maybe they haena come throw the hards like them.”

“And syne there’ll be ane or twa cruppen in like that chosen vessel o’ grace they ca’ Robert Bruce. I’m sure he’s eneuch to ruin ye i’ the sicht o’ the warl’, hooever you and he may fare at heid-quarters, bein’ a’ called and chosen thegither.”

“For God’s sake, dinna think that sic as him gies ony token o’ bein’ ane o’ the elec.”

“Hoo wan he in than? They say ye’re unco’ particular. The Elec sud ken an elec.”

"It's the siller, man, that blin's the een o' them that hae to sit in jeedgment upo' the applicants. The crater professed, and they war jist ower willin' to believe him."

"Weel, gin that be the case, I dinna see that ye're sae far aheid o' fowk that disna mak' sae mony pretensions."

"Indeed, Mr. Cupples, I fully doobt that the displeesur o' the Almichty is restin' upo' oor kirk; and Mr. Turnbull, honest man, appears to feel the wacht o' 't. We hae mair than ae instance i' the Scriptur o' a haill community sufferin' for the sin o' ane."

"Do ye ken ony instance o' a gude man no bein' able to win in to your set?"

"Ay, ane, I think. There was a fule body that wantit sair to sit doon wi' 's. But what cud we do? We cudna ken whether he had savin' grace or no, for the body cudna speyk that a body cud unnerstan' him."

"And ye didna lat him sit doon wi' ye?"

"Na. Hoo cud we?"

["The Lord didna dee for him, did he?"

"We cudna tell."

"And what did the pair cratur do?"

"He grat" (*wept.*)

"And hoo cam' ye to see that ye wad hae been a' the better o' a wee mair pooer to read the heart?"

“Whan the cratur was deein’, the string o’ his tongue, whether that string lay in his mou’, or in his brain, was lousened, and he spak’ plain, and he praised God.”

“Weel, I *cannot* see that your plan, haudin’ oot innocents that lo’e Him, and lattin’ in thieves that wad steal oot o’ the Lord’s ain bag—gie them a chance—can be an impruvment upo’ the auld fashion o’ settin’ a man to judge himsel’, and tak’ the wyte o’ the jeedgment upo’ ’s ain shouthers.”

## CHAPTER XVI.

ANNIE began to perceive that it was time for her to go, partly from the fact that she was no longer wanted so much, and partly from finding in herself certain conditions of feeling which she did not know what to do with.

“Annie’s coming back to you in a day or two, Mr. Bruce,” said Mrs. Forbes, having called to pay some of her interest, and wishing to prepare the way for her return. “She has been with me a long time, but you know she was ill, and I could not part with her besides.”

“Weel, mem,” answered Bruce, “we’ll be verra happy to tak’ her hame again, as sune’s ye hae had a’ the use ye want o’ her.”

He had never assumed this tone before, either to Mrs. Forbes or with regard to Annie. But she took no notice of it.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Bruce received the girl so

kindly that she did not know what to make of it. Mr. Bruce especially was all sugar and butter—rancid butter of course. When she went up to her old rat-haunted room, her astonishment was doubled. For the holes in floor and roof had been mended; the sky-light was as clean as glass a hundred years old could be; a square of carpet lay in the middle of the floor; and cheque-curtains adorned the bed. She concluded that these luxuries had been procured for Mr. Cupples, but could not understand how they came to be left for her.

Nor did the consideration shown her decrease after the first novelty of her return had worn off; and altogether the main sources of her former discomfort had ceased to flow. The baby had become a sweet-tempered little girl; Johnnie was at school all day; and Robert was a comparatively well-behaved, though still sulky youth. He gave himself great airs to his former companions, but to Annie he was condescending. He was a good student, and had the use of *the room* for a study.

Robert Bruce the elder had disclosed his projects to his heir, and he had naturally declined all effort for their realization. But he began at length to observe that Annie had grown very pretty; and then he thought it would be a nice thing to fall in love with her, since, from his parents' wishes to that end she must have some money. Annie, however,



did not suspect anything, till, one day, she overheard the elder say to the younger,

“Ye dinna push, man. Gang benn to the chop and get a cnottie o’ reid candy-sugar, and gie her that the neist time ye see her her lane. The likes o’ her kens what that means. And gin she tak’s ’t frae ye, ye may hae the run o’ thê drawer. It’s worth while, ye ken. Them ’at winna saw, winna reap.”

From that moment she was on her guard. Nor did she give the youth a chance of putting his father’s advice into operation.

Meantime Alec got better and better, went out with Mr. Cupples in the gig, ate like an ogre, drank like a hippopotamus, and was rapidly recovering his former strength. As he grew better, his former grief did draw nearer, but such was the freshness of his new life, that he seemed to have died and risen again like Lazarus, leaving his sorrow behind him in the grave, to be communed with only in those dim seasons when ghosts walk.

One evening over their supper, he was opposing Mr. Cupples’s departure for the twentieth time. At length the latter said:

“Alec, I’ll bide wi’ ye till the neist session upon ae condition.”

“What is that, Mr. Cupples?” said Mrs. Forbes. “I shall be delighted to know it.”

“Ye see, mem, this young rascal here made a fule o’ ’msel’ last session and didna pass; and——”

“Let bygones be bygones, if you please, Mr. Cupples,” said Mrs. Forbes pleasantly.

“’Deed no, mem. What ’s the use o’ byganes buttolearn fraethem hoo to meet the bycomes? Ye’ll please to hear me oot; and gin Alec doesna like to hear me, he maun jist sit *and* hear me.”

“Fire away, Mr. Cupples,” said Alec.

“I will.—For them that didna pass i’ the en’ o’ the last session, there’s an examination i’ the beginnin’ o’ the neist—gin they like to stan’ ’t. Gin they dinna, they maun gang throu the same classes ower again, and stan’ the examination at the end—that is, gin they want a degree; and that’s a terrible loss o’ time for the start. Noo, gin Alec’ll set to wark like a man, I’ll help him a’ that I can; and by the gatherin’ again, he’ll be up wi’ the lave o’ the fleet. Faith! I’ll sit like Deith i’ the spectre-bark, and blaw intil his sails a’ that I can blaw. Maybe ye dinna ken that verse i’ *The Rhyme o’ the Ancient Mariner*? It was left oot o’ the later editions :

‘A gust of wind sterte up behind,  
And whistled through his bones;  
Through the holes of his eyes and the hole of his mouth,  
Half-whistles and half-groans.’

There! that's spicy—for them 'at likes ghaistry."

That very day Alec resumed. Mr. Cupples would not let him work a moment after he began to show symptoms of fatigue. But the limit was moved further and further every day, till at length he could work four hours. His tutor would not hear of any further extension, and declared he would pass triumphantly.

The rest of the summer-day they spent in wandering about, or lying in the grass, for it was a hot and dry summer, so that the grass was a very bed of health. Then came all the pleasures of the harvest. And when the evenings grew cool, there were the books that Mr. Cupples foraged for in Glamerton, seeming to find them by the scent.

And Mr. Cupples tried to lead Alec into philosophical ways of regarding things; for he had just enough of religion to get some good of philosophy—which itself is the religion of skeletons.

"Ye see," he would say, "it's pairt o' the machine. What a body has to do is to learn what pinion or steam-box, or piston, or muckle water-wheel he represents, and stick to that, defyin' the deevil, whase wark is to put the machine oot o' gear. And sae he maun grin' awa', and whan Deith comes, he'll say, as Andrew Wylie did—'Weel run, little wheelie!' and tak' him awa' wi' him some gait or ither, whaur, maybe, he may

mak' choice o' his ain machine for the neist trial."

"That's some cauld doctrine, Mr. Cupples," Alec would say.

"Weel," he would return with a smile, "gang to yer frien' Thamas Crann, and he'll gie ye something a hantle better. That's ane o' the maist extrornar men I ever made acquaintance wi'. He'll gie ye divine philosophy—a dooms sicht better nor mine. But, eh! he's saft for a' that."

Annie would have got more good from these readings than either of them. Mr. Cupples was puzzled to account for her absence, but came to see into the mother's defensive strategy, who had not yet learned to leave such things to themselves; though she might have known by this time that the bubbles, of scheming mothers, positive or negative, however well-blown, are in danger of collapsing into a drop of burning poison. He missed Annie very much, and went often to see her, taking her what books he could. With one or other of these she would wander along the banks of the clear brown Glamour, now watching it as it subdued its rocks or lay asleep in its shadowy pools, now reading a page or two, and now seating herself on the grass, and letting the dove of peace fold its wings upon her bosom. Even her new love did not more than occasionally ruffle the flow of her inward river. She

had long cherished a deeper love, which kept it very calm. Her stillness was always wandering into prayer; but never did she offer a petition that associated Alec's fate with her own; though sometimes she would find herself holding up her heart like an empty cup which knew that it was empty. She missed Tibbie Dyster dreadfully.

One day, thinking she heard Mr. Cupples come upstairs, she ran down with a smile on her face, which fell off it like a withered leaf when she saw no one there but Robert the student. He, taking the smile for himself, rose and approached her with an ugly response on his heavy countenance. She turned and flew up again to her room; whither to her horror he followed her, demanding a kiss. An ordinary Scotch maiden of Annie's rank would have answered such a request from a man she did not like with a box on the ear, tolerably delivered; but Annie was too proud even to struggle, and submitted like a marble statue, except that she could not help wiping her lips after the salute. The youth walked away more discomfited than if she had made angry protestations, and a successful resistance.

Annie sat down and cried. Her former condition in the house was enviable to this.—That same evening, without saying a word to any one, for there was a curious admixture of outward

lawlessness with the perfect inward obedience of the girl, she set out for Clippenstrae, on the opposite bank of the Wan Water. It was a gorgeous evening. The sun was going down in purple and crimson, divided by such bars of gold as never grew in the mines of Ophir. A faint rosy mist hung its veil over the hills about the sunset; and a torrent of red light streamed down the westward road by which she went. The air was soft, and the light sobered with a sense of the coming twilight. It was such an evening as we have, done into English, in the ninth Evening Voluntary of Wordsworth. And Annie felt it such. Thank God, it does not need a poetic education to feel such things. It needs a poetic education to *say* such things so, that another, not seeing, yet shall see; but that such a child as Annie should not be able to feel them, would be the one argument to destroy our belief in the genuineness of the poet's vision. For, if so, can the vision have come from Nature's self? Has it not rather been evoked by the magic rod of the poet's will from his own chambers of imagery?



## CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN she reached Clippenstrae, she found that she had been sent there. Her aunt came from the inner room as she opened the door, and she knew at once by her face that Death was in the house. For its expression recalled the sad vision of her father's departure. Her great-uncle, the little grey-headed old cottar in the Highland bonnet, lay dying—in the Highland bonnet still. He was going to “the land o’ the Leal” (*loyal*), the true-hearted, to wait for his wife, whose rheumatism was no chariot of fire for swiftness, whatever it might be for pain, to bear her to the “high countries.” He has had nothing to do with our story, save that once he made our Annie feel that she had a home. And to give that feeling to another is worth living for, and justifies a place in any story like mine.

Auntie Meg's grief appeared chiefly in her nose; but it was none the less genuine for that, for her



nature was chiefly nose. She led the way into the death-room—it could hardly be called the sick room—and Annie followed. By the bedside sat, in a high-backed chair, an old woman with more wrinkles in her face than moons in her life. She was perfectly calm, and looked like one, already half-across the river, watching her friend as he passed her towards the opposing bank. The old man lay with his eyes closed. As soon as he knew that he was dying he had closed his eyes, that the dead orbs might not stare into the faces of the living. It had been a whim of his for years. He would leave the house decent when his lease was up. And the will kept pressing down the lids which it would soon have no power to lift.

“Ye’re come in time,” said Auntie Meg, and whispered to the old woman—“My brither Jeames’s bairn.”

“Ay, ye’re come in time, lassie,” said the great-aunt kindly, and said no more.

The dying man heard the words, opened his eyes, glanced once at Annie, and closed them again.

“Is that ane o’ the angels come?” he asked, for his wits were gone a little way before.

“Na, weel I wat!” said the hard-mouthed ungracious Meg. “It’s Annie Anderson, Jeames Anderson’s lass.”

The old man put his hand feebly from under the bed-clothes.

"I'm glaid to see ye, dawtie," he said, still without opening his eyes. "I aye wantit to see mair o' ye, for ye're jist sic a bairn as I wad hae likit to hae mysel', gin it had pleased the Lord. Ye're a douce, God-fearin' lassie, and He'll tak care o' his ain."

Here his mind began to wander again.

"Marget," he said, "is my een steekit, for I think I see angels?"

"Ay are they—close eneuch."

"Weel, that's verra weel. I'll hae a sleep noo."

He was silent for some time. Then he reverted to the fancy that Annie was the first of the angels come to carry away his soul, and murmured brokenly:

"Whan ye tak' it up, be carefu' hoo ye han'le 't, baith for it's some weyk, and for it's no ower clean, and nicht blaud the bonnie white han's o' sic God-servers as yersels. I ken mysel there's ae spot ower the hert o' 't, whilk cam o' an ill word I gied a bairn for stealin' a neep. But they did steal a hantle that year. And there's anither spot upo' the richt han', whilk cam o' ower gude a bargain I made wi' auld John Thamson at Glass fair. And it wad never come oot wi' a' the soap and

water—Hoots, I'm haverin'! It's upo' the han' o' my soul, whaur soap and water can never come. Lord, dight it clean, and I'll gie him 't a' back whan I see him in thy kingdom. And I'll beg his pardon forbye. But I didna chait him a'the-gither. I only tuik mair nor I wad hae gi'en for the colt mysel'. And min' ye dinna lat me fa', gaein' throu the lift."

He went on thus, with wandering thoughts that in their wildest vagaries were yet tending homeward; and which when least sound, were yet busy with the wisest of mortal business—repentance. By degrees he fell into a slumber, and from that, about midnight, into a deeper sleep.

The next morning, Annie went out. She could not feel oppressed or sorrowful at such a death, and she would walk up the river to the churchyard where her father lay. The Wan Water was shallow, and therefore full of talk about all the things that were deep secrets when its bosom was full. Along great portions of its channel, the dry stones lay like a sea-beach. They had been swept from the hills in the torrents of its autumnal fury. The fish did not rise, for the heat made them languid. No trees sheltered them from the rays of the sun. Both above and below, the banks were rugged, and the torrent strong; but at this part the stream flowed through level fields. Here and there a

large piece had cracked off and fallen from the bank, to be swept away in the next flood; but meantime the grass was growing on it, greener than anywhere else. The corn would come close to the water's edge and again sweep away to make room for cattle and sheep; and here and there a field of red clover lay wavering between shadow and shine. She went up a long way, and then crossing some fields, came to the churchyard. She did not know her father's grave, for no stone marked the spot where he sank in this broken earthy sea. There was no church: its memory even had vanished. It seemed as if the churchyard had swallowed the church as the heavenly light shall one day swallow the sun and the moon; and the lake of divine fire shall swallow death and hell. She lingered a little, and then set out on her slow return, often sitting down on the pebbles, sea-worn ages before the young river had begun to play with them.

Resting thus about half way home, she sang a song which she had found in her father's old song-book. She had said it once to Alec and Curly, but they did not care much for it, and she had not thought of it again till now.

“Ane by ane they gang awa’.

‘The gatherer gathers great an’ sma’.

Ane by ane maks ane an’ a’.

Aye whan ane is ta'en frae ane,  
Ane on earth is left alane,  
Twa in heaven are knit again.

Whan God's hairst is in or lang,  
Golden-heidit, ripe, and thrang,  
Syne begins a better sang."

She looked up, and Curly was walking through the broad river to where she sat.

"I kent ye a mile aff, Annie," he said.

"I'm glaid to see ye, Curly."

"I wonner gin ye'll be as glaid to see me the neist time, Annie."

Then Annie perceived that Curly looked earnest and anxious.

"What do ye say, Curly?" she returned.

"I hardly ken what I say, Annie, though I ken what I mean. And I dinna ken what I'm gaun to say neist, but they say the trowth will oot. I wiss it wad, ohn a body said it."

"What can be the maitter, Curly?"—Annie was getting frightened.—"It maun be ill news, or ye wadna luik like that."

"I doobt it'll be warst news to them that it's nae news till."

"Ye speyk in riddles, Curly."

He tried to laugh but succeeded badly, and stood before her, with downcast eyes, poking his thorn-stick into the mass of pebbles. Annie

waited in silence, and that brought it out at last.

"Annie, when we war at the schule thegither, I wad hae gien ye onything. Noo I hae gien ye a' thing, and my hert to the beet (*boot*) o' the bargain."

"Curly!" said Annie, and said no more, for she felt as if her heart would break.

"I likit ye at the schule, Annie; but noo there's naething i' the warl but you."

Annie rose gently, came close to him, and laying a hand on his arm, said,

"I'm richt sorry for ye, Curly."

He half turned his back, was silent for a moment, and then said coldly, but in a trembling voice,

"Dinna distress yersel'. We canna help it."

"But what 'll ye do, Curly?" asked Annie in a tone full of compassionate loving-kindness, and with her hand still on his arm. "It's sair to bide."

"Gude kens that.—I maun jist warstle throu' 't like mony anither. I'll awa' back to the pig-skin saiddle I was workin at," said Curly, with a smile at the bitterness of his fate.

"It's no that I dinna like ye, Curly. Ye ken that. I wad do onything for ye that I cud do. Ye hae been a gude frien' to me."

And here Annie burst out crying.

"Dinna greit. The Lord preserve 's! dinna greit. I winna say anither word aboot it. What's

Curly that sic a ane as you sud greit for him? Faith! it's nearhan' as guid as gin ye lo'ed me. I'm as prood 's a turkey-cock," averred Curly in a voice ready to break with emotion of a very different sort from pride.

"It 's a sair thing that things winna gang richt!" said Annie at last, after many vain attempts to stop the fountain by drying the stream of her tears.—I believe they were the first words of complaint upon things in general that she ever uttered.

"Is 't my wyte, Curly?" she added.

"Deil a bit o' 't!" cried Curly. "And I beg yer pardon for sweirin'. Your wyte! I was aye a fule. But maybe," he added, brightening a little, "I micht hae a chance—some day—some day far awa', ye ken, Annie?"

"Na, na, Curly. Dinna think o' 't. There 's no chance for ye, dear Curly."

His face flushed red as a peony.

"That lick-the-dirt 's no gaun to gar ye marry the colliginer?"

"Dinna ye be feared that I 'll marry onybody I dinna like, Curly."

"Ye dinna like him, I houp to God!"

"I canna bide him."

"Weel, maybe—Wha kens? I *daurna* despair."

"Curly, Curly, I maun be honest wi' you, as ye



hae been wi' me. Whan ance a body's seen ane, they canna see anither, ye ken. Wha cud hae been at the schule as I was sae lang, and syne taen oot o' the water, ye ken, and syne——?"

Annie stopped.

"Gin ye mean Alec Forbes——" said Curly and stopped too. But presently he went on again—"Gin I war to come atween Alec Forbes and you, hangin' wad be ower gude for me. But has Alec——"

"Na, nae a word. But haud yer tongue, Curly. Ance is a' wi' me.—It's nae mony lasses wad hae tell't ye sic a thing. But I ken it's richt. Ye're the only ane that has my secret. Keep it, Curly."

"Like Deith himsel'," said Curly. "Ye *are* a braw lass."

"Ye maunna think ill o' me, Curly. I hae tell't ye the trowth."

"Jist lat me kiss yer bonnie han' and I'll gang content."

Wisely done or not, it was truth and tenderness that made her offer her lips instead. He turned in silence, comforted for the time, though the comfort would evaporate long before the trouble would sink.

"Curly!" cried Annie, and he came back.

"I think that's young Robert Bruce been to Clippenstrae to speir efter me. Dinna lat him come farther. He's an unceevil fallow."

“Gin he wins by me, he maun hae mair feathers nor I hae,” said Curly, and walked on.

Annie followed slowly. When she saw the men meet she sat down.

Curly spoke first, as he came up.

“A fine day, Robbie,” he said.

Bruce made no reply, for relations had altered since school-days. It was an evil moment however in which to carry a high chin to Willie Macwha, who was out of temper with the whole world except Annie Anderson. He strode up to the *colliginer*.

“I said it was a fine day,” he repeated.

“Well, I said nothing to the contrary,” answered Bruce, putting on his English.

“It’s the custom i’ this country to mak what answer a man has the sense to mak whan he’s spoken till ceevily.”

“I considered you uncivil.”

“That’s jist what a bonnie lassie sittin’ yonner said aboot you whan she prayed me no to lat you gang a step nearer till her.”

Curly found it at the moment particularly agreeable to quarrel. Moreover he had always disliked Bruce, and now hated him because Annie had complained of him.

“I have as much right to walk here as you or any one else,” said Bruce.

"Maybe ; but even colliginers doesna aye get their richts. Ae richt whiles rides upo' the tap o' anither. And Annie Anderson has a richt no to be disturbit, whan her uncle, honest man, 's jist lyin' waitin' for 's coffin i' the hoose yonner."

"I 'm her cousin."

"It's sma' comfort ony o' yer breed ever brocht her. Cousin or no, ye sanna gang near her."

"I'll go where I please," said Bruce, moving to pass.

Curly moved right in front of him.

"By me ye shanna gang. I hae lickit ye afore for bein' ill till her ; and I will again gin ye gang a step nearer till her. She doesna want ye. Faith I will ! But I wad raither no fecht afore her. Sae jist come back to the toon wi' me, and we'll say nae mair aboot it."

"I'll see you damned !" said Bruce.

"Maybe ye may, bein' likly to arrive at the spot first. But i' the meantime, gin ye dinna want her to see ye lickit, come doon into yon how, and we'll jist saddle aff han' wha's the best man o' the twa."

"I won't move a step to please you or any one else," returned Bruce. He saw that his safety consisted in keeping within sight of Annie.

Curly saw on his part that, a few steps nearer to where Annie sat, the path led behind a stunted

ash-tree. So he stepped aside with the proverb,  
“He that will to Coupar, maun to Coupar.”

Without deigning a word, Bruce walked on, full of pride, concluding that Curly’s heart had failed him. But the moment he was behind the tree, Curly met him from the other side of it. Then Bruce’s anger, if not his courage, rose, and with an oath, he pushed against him to pass. But the sensation he instantly felt in his nose astonished him; and the blood beginning to flow cowed him at once. He put his handkerchief to his face, turned, and walked back to Glamerton. Curly followed him at a few yards’ distance, regretting that he had showed the white feather so soon, as, otherwise, he would have had the pleasure of thrashing him properly. He saw him safe in at the back-door, and then went to his own father’s shop.

After a short greeting, very short on Curly’s part,

“Hoot! Willie,” said his father, “what’s come ower ye? Ye luik as gin some lass had said *na* to ye.”

“Some lasses’ *no* ’s better nor ither lasses’ *ay*, father.”

“Deed maybe, laddie,” said George; adding to himself, “That maun hae been Annie Anderson—*nae* ither.”

He was particularly attentive and yielding to

Willie during his short visit, and Willie understood it.

Had Annie been compelled, by any evil chance, to return to the garret over Robert Bruce's shop, she would not indeed have found the holes in the floor and the roof reopened; but she would have found that the carpet and the curtains were gone.

The report went through Glamerton that she and Willie Macwha were *coortin'*.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THOMAS CRANN'S conversation with Mr. Cupples deepened both his annoyance and his grief at the membership of Robert Bruce. What was the use of a church if such men as he got into it, and, having got in, could not be got out? Had he been guilty of any open *fault*, such as getting drunk, for one solitary and accidental instance of which they had excluded one of their best and purest-minded men, they could have got rid of him with comparative ease; but who so free of fault as Bruce? True, he was guilty of the crime of over-reaching whenever he had a chance, and of cheating when there was no risk of being found out—at least so every body believed—but he had no faults. The duty, therefore, that lay upon every member, next to the cleanness of his own garments—that of keeping the church pure and unspotted—was hard to fulfil, and no one was ready to undertake it but Thomas Crann. For what a

spot was here! And Thomas knew his Lord's will.

Neither was the duty so unpleasant to Thomas's oppositive nature, as it would have been to a man of easier temperament.

"Jeames Johnstone," he said, "the kirk maks nae progress. It's no as i' the time o' the apostles whan the saved war added till 't daily."

"Weel, ye see," returned James, "that wasna oor kirk exacly; and it wasna Mr. Turnbull that was the heid o' 't."

"It's a' the same. The prenciple's the same. An' Mr. Turnbull preaches the same gospel Peter and Paul praiched, and wi' unction too. And yet here's the congregation dwin'lin' awa', and the church itsel' like naething but bees efter the brun-stane. *I* say there's an Ahchan i' the camp—a Jonah i' the vessel—a son o' Saul i' the kingdom o' Dawvid—a Judas amo' the twal'—a——"

"Hoots! Thomas Crann; ye're no pittin' a' thae gran' names upo' that puir feckless body, Rob Bruce, are ye?"

"He's nane feckless for the deevil's wark or for his ain, which is ae thing and the same. Oot he maun gang, gin we tak' him by the scruff o' the neck and the doup o' the breeks."

"Dinna jeist, Thomas, aboot sic a dangerous thing," said James, mildly glad of one solitary op-



portunity of rebuking the granite-minded mason.

"Jeist! I 'm far eneuch frae jeistin'. Ye dinna ken fervour frae jokin', Jeames Johnstone."

"He nicht tak' the law upo 's for defamin' o' 's character; and that wad be an awfu' thing for puir fowk like us, Thamas."

"Aye the same thing ower again, Jeames! Shy at a stane, and fa' into the stank (*ditch*). That's the pairt o' a colt and no o' a Christian."

"But arena we tellt to be wise as serpents?"

"Ye wad tak' a heap o' tellin' upo' that heid, Jeames."

"Ow, 'deed ay! And I'm no my lane, Thamas. But we *are* tellt that."

"The serpent turned oot an ill cooncettor upon ae occasion ower well to be remembert by Adam's race."

"The words stan' as I say," persisted James.

"Ye're no to mak' the serpent yer cooncettor, man. But ance ye ken yer duty, ye may weel tak example by him hoo to carry 't oot. Did ye ever see an edder lyin' ower a stane as gin he was naething but a stick himsel', bidin' 's time? That 's me, i' the Scriptur' sense. I 'm only bidin' till I see hoo. A body maunna do ill that gude may come, though wow! it's a sair temptation whiles; neither maun a body neglec to do richt for fear that ill may follow."

“Ay, true that. But ye needna burn the hoose to rid the rottans. I doot ye’ll get ’s a’ into ower het water; and a body needna tak’ the skin aff for the sake o’ cleanliness. Jist tak ye tent (*care, attention*), Thamas, what ye’re about.”

Having thus persisted in opposing Thomas to a degree he had never dared before, James took his departure, pursued by the words:

“Tak ye care, Jeames, that in savin’ the richt han’ ye dinna send the haill body to hell. It was aye yer danger. I never got bauld coonsel frae ye yet.”

“There’s mair vertues i’ the Bible nor courage, Thamas,” retorted James, holding the outer door open to throw the sentence in, and shutting it instantly to escape with the last word.

Thomas, abandoned to his own resources, meditated long and painfully. But all he could arrive at was the resolution to have another talk with Mr. Cupples. He might not be a Christian man, but he was an honest and trustworthy man, and might be able, from his scholarship, to give him some counsel. So he walked to Howglen the next day, and found him with Alec in the harvest-field. And Alec’s reception of Thomas showed what a fine thing illness is for bringing people to their right minds.

Mr. Cupples walked aside with Thomas, and

they seated themselves on two golden sheaves at the foot of a stook.

"What ye said to me the ither day, sir," began Thomas, "has stucken fest i' my crap, ever sin' syne. We maun hae him oot."

"Na, na; ye better lat him sit. He'll haud doon yer pride. That man's a judgment on ye for wantin' to be better nor yer neebors. Dinna try to win free o' judgment. But I'll tell ye what I wad hae ye do: Mak muckle o' 'm. Gie him tether eneuch. He'll gang frae ill to waur, ye may depen'. He'll steal or a' be dune."

"To the best o' my belief, sir, that's no to come. He's stolen already, or I'm sair mista'en."

"Ay! Can ye pruv that? That's anither maitter," returned Cupples, beginning to be interested.

"I dinna ken whether I oucht to hae mentioned it to ane that wasna a member, though; but it jist cam oot o' 'tsel' like."

"Sae the fac' that a man's a member wha's warst crime may be that he is a member, maks him sic precious gear that he maunna be meddlet wi' i' the presence o' an honest man, wha, thank God, has neither pairt nor lot in ony sic maitter?"

"Dinna be angry, Mr. Cupples. I'll tell ye a' about it," pleaded Thomas, than who no man could better recognize good sense.

But the Cosmo Cupples who thus attracted the confidence of Thomas Crann was a very different man from the Cosmo Cupples whom first Alec Forbes went to the garret to see at his landlady's suggestion. All the flabbiness had passed from his face, and his eyes shone clearer than ever from a clear complexion. His mouth still gave a first impression of unsteadiness; no longer, however, from the formlessness of the loose lips, but from the continual flickering of a nascent smile that rippled their outline with long wavy motions of evanescent humour. His dress was still careless, but no longer neglected, and his hand was as steady as a rifleman's.

Nor had he found it so hard to conquer his fearful habit as even he had expected; for with every week passed in bitter abstinence, some new well would break from the rich soil of his intellect, and irrigate with its sweet waters the parched borderland between his physical and psychical being. And when he had once again betaken himself to the forsaken pen, there was little reason to fear a relapse or doubt a final victory. A playful humanity radiated from him, the result of that powerfulest of all restoratives—*giving* of what one has to him who has not. Indeed his reformation had begun with this. St. Paul taught a thief to labour, that he might have to give: Love

taught Mr. Cupples to deny himself that he might rescue his friend; and presently he had found his feet touching the rock. If he had not yet learned to look "straight up to heaven," his eyes wandered not unfrequently towards that spiritual horizon upon which things earthly and things heavenly meet and embrace.

To such a Cosmo Cupples, then, Thomas told the story of Annie Anderson's five-pound note. As he spoke, Cupples was tormented as with the flitting phantom of a half-forgotten dream. All at once, light flashed upon him.

"And sae what am I to do?" asked Thomas as he finished his tale.—"I can pruv naething; but I'm certain i'my ain min', kennin the man's nater, that it was that note he tuik oot o' the Bible."

"I'll put the proof o' that same into yer han's, or I'm sair mista'en," said Mr. Cupples.

"You, Mr. Cupples?"

"Ay me, Mr. Crann. But maybe ye wadna tak proof frae sic a sinner against sic a sanct. Sae ye may keep yer sanct i' yer holy boasom."

"Dinna gang on that gait, Mr. Cupples. Gin ye can direc' me to the purification o' our wee bit temple, I'll hearken heumbly. I only wiss ye war ane o' us."

"I'll bide till ye hae gotten rid o' Bruce, ony gait.—I care naething for yer sma' separatist

kirkies.—I wonner ye dinna pray for a clippin' o' an auld sun that ye micht do withoot the common daylight. But I do think it's a great shame—that sic a sneak sud be i' the company o' honest fowk, as I tak the maist o' ye to be. Sae I'll do my best. Ye'll hear frae me in a day or twa."

Cupples had remembered the inscription on the fly-leaf of the big Bible, which, according to Thomas Crann, Mr. Cowie had given to Annie. He now went to James Dow.

"Did Annie ever tell ye aboot a bible that Mr. Cowie ga'e her, Jeames?"

"Ay did she. I min' 't fine."

"Cud ye get a haud o' 't."

"Eh! I dinna ken. The crater has laid his ain cleuks upo' 't. It's a sod pity that Annie's oot o' the hoose, or she micht hae stown 't (*stolen it*)."

"Truly, bein' her ain, she micht. But ye're a kin' o' a guairdian till her—arena ye?"

"Ow! ay. I hae made mysel' that in a way; but Bruce wad aye be luikit upon as the proper guairdian."

"Hae ye ony hand upo' the siller?"

"I gart him sign a lawyer's paper aboot it."

"Weel, ye jist gang and demand the bible, alang wi' the lave o' Annie's property. Ye ken she's had trouble aboot her kist (*chest*), and canna get it frae the swallowin' cratur'. And gin he



maks ony demur, jist drap a hint o' gaein to the lawyer aboot it. The like o' him's as fleyt at a lawyer as cats at cauld water. Get the bible we maun. And ye maun fess't to me direckly."

Dow was a peaceable man, and did not much relish the commission. Cupples, thinking he too was a missionar, told him the story.

"Weel," said Dow, "lat him sit there. Maybe they'll haud him frae doin' mair mischeef. Whan ye jabble a stank, the stink rises."

"I thoct ye was ane o' them. Ye maunna lat it oot."

"Na, na. I s' haud my tongue."

"I care naething aboot it. But there's Thamas Crann jist eatin' his ain hert. It's a sin to lat sic a man live in sic distress."

"'Deed is 't. He's a gude man that. And he's been verra kin' to oor Annie, Mr. Cupples.—I'll do as ye say. Whan do ye want it?"

"This verra nicht."

So after his day's work, which was hard enough at this season of the year, was over, James Dow put on his blue Sunday coat, and set off to the town. He found Robert Bruce chaffering with a country girl over some butter, for which he wanted to give her less than the market-value. This roused his indignation, and put him in a much fitter mood for an altercation.



"I winna gie ye mair nor fivepence. Hoo are ye the day, Mr. Doo? I tell ye it has a goo (*Fren: goût*) o' neeps or something waur."

"Hoo can that be, Mr. Bruce, at this sizzon o' the year, whan there's plenty o' gerss for man an' beast an' a' cratur?" said the girl.

"It's no for me to say hoo it can be. That's no my business. Noo, Mr. Doo?"

Bruce, whose very life lay in driving bargains, had a great dislike to any interruption of the process. Yet he forsook the girl as if he had said all he had to say, and turned to James Dow. For he wanted to get rid of him before concluding his bargain with the girl, whose butter he was determined to have, even if he must pay her own price for it. Like the Reeve in the *Canterbury Tales*, who "ever rode the hinderest of the rout," being such a rogue and such a rogue-catcher that he could not bear anybody behind his back, Bruce, when about the business that his soul loved, eschewed the presence of any third person.

"Noo, Mr. Doo?" he said.

"My business 'll keep," replied Dow.

"But ye see we're busy the nicht, Mr. Doo."

"Weel, I dinna want to hurry ye. But I wonder that ye wad buy ill butter, to please onybody, even a bonnie lass like that."

"Some fowk likes the taste o' neeps, though I

dinna like it mysel’,” answered Bruce. “But the fac’ that neeps is no a favourite wi’ the maist o’ fowk, brings doon the price i’ the market.”

“Neeps is neither here nor there,” said the girl; and, taking up her basket, she was going to leave the shop.

“Bide a bit, my lass,” cried Bruce. “The mistress wad like to see ye. Jist gang benn the hoose to her wi’ yer basket, and see what she thinks o’ the butter. I may be wrang, ye ken.”

So saying he opened the inner door, and ushered the young woman into the kitchen.

“Noo, Mr. Doo?” he said once more. “Is ’t tobawco, or sneeshin (*snuff*), or what is ’t?”

“It ’s Annie Anderson’s kist and a’ her gear.”

“I ’m surprised at ye, Jeames Doo. There ’s the lassie’s room up the stair, fit for ony princess, whanever she likes to come back till ’t. But she was aye a royt (*riotous*) lassie, an’ a reglar rintheroot.”

“Ye lee, Rob Bruce,” exclaimed Dow, surprised out of his proprieties. “Whaeveer ye say that till, dinna say ’t to me.”

Bruce was anything but a quarrelsome man with other than his inferiors. He pocketed the lie very calmly.

“Dinna lowse yer temper, Mr. Doo. It ’s a sair fau’t that.”

“Jist ye deliver up the bairn’s effecks, or I’ll gang to them that’ll gar ye.”

“Wha micht that be, Mr. Doo?” asked Bruce, wishing first to find out how far Dow was prepared to go.

“Ye hae no richt whatever to keep that lassie’s claes, as gin she aucht (*owed*) you onything for rent.”

“Hae *ye* ony richt to tak them awa’? Hoo ken I what’ll come o’ them?”

“Weel, I s’ awa’ doon to Mr. Gibb, and we’ll see what can be dune there. It’s weel kent ower a’ Glamerton, Mr. Bruce, in what mainner you and yer haill hoose hae borne yersels to that orphan lassie; and I’ll gang into ilka chop, as I gang doon the street, that is, whaur I’m acquaint, and I’ll jist tell them whaur I’m gaun, and what for.”

The thing which beyond all others Bruce dreaded was unremunerative notoriety.

“Hoots! Jeames Doo, ye dinna ken jokin’ frae jeistin’. I never was the man to set mysel’ i’ the face o’ onything rizzonable. But ye see it wad be cast up to the haill o’ ’s that we had driven the puir lassie oot o’ the hoose, and syne flung her things efter her.”

“The tane ye hae dune. The tither ye shanna do, for I’ll tak them. And I’ll tell ye what fowk’ll

say gin ye dinna gie up the things. They 'll say that ye baith drave her awa' and keepit her bit duds. I 'll see to that—and *mair forbye*."

Bruce understood that he referred to Annie's money. His object in refusing to give up her box had been to retain as long as possible a chance of persuading her to return to his house; for should she leave it finally, her friends might demand the interest in money, which at present he was bound to pay only in aliment and shelter, little of either of which she required at his hands. But here was a greater danger still.

"Mother," he cried, "pit up Miss Anderson's claes in her box, to gang wi' the carrier the morn's mornin'."

"I 'll tak them wi' me," said Dow resolutely.

"Ye canna. Ye haena a cairt."

"Ye get them pitten up, and I 'll fess a barrow," said James, leaving the shop.

He borrowed a wheelbarrow from Thomas Crann, and found the box ready for him when he returned. The moment he lifted it, he was certain from the weight of the poor little property, that the bible was not there.

"Ye haena pitten in Mr. Cooie's bible."

"Mother! did ye pit in the bible?" cried Bruce, for the house-door was open.

"'Deed no, father. It's better whaur 't is,"

said Mrs. Bruce from the kitchen, with shrill response.

"Ye see, Mr. Doo, the bible 's lain sae lang there, that it's jist oor ain. And the lassie canna want it till she has a faimily to hae worship wi'. And syne she s' be welcome to tak' it."

"Ye gang up the stair for the buik, or I'll gang mysel'."

Bruce went and fetched it, with a bad grace enough, and handed over with it the last tattered remnants of his respectability into the hands of James Dow.

Mr. Cupples, having made a translation of the inscription, took it to Thomas Crann.

"Do ye min' what Bruce read that nicht ye saw him tak' something oot o' the beuk?" he asked as he entered.

"Ay, weel that. He began wi the twenty-third psalm, and gaed on to the neist."

"Weel, read that. I faun' 't on a blank leaf o' the buik."

Thomas read— '*Over the twenty-third psalm of David I have laid a five-pound note for my dear Annie Anderson, after my death*'—and lifting his eyes, stared at Mr. Cupples, his face slowly brightening with satisfaction. Then a cloud came over his brow—for was he not rejoicing in iniquity? At least he was rejoicing in coming shame.

"Hoo cud it hae been," he asked after a brief pause, "that Bruce didna fa' upo' this, as weel's you, Mr. Cupples, or didna scart it oot?"

"'Cause t' was written in Latin. The body hadna the wit to misdoobt the contents o' 't. It said naething *till* him, and he never thought it cud say onything *aboot* him."

"It's a fine thing to be a scholar, Mr. Cupples."

"Ay, whiles."

"They say the Miss Cowies are great scholars."

"Verra likly.—But there's ae thing mair I wad put ye up till. Can ye tell the day o' the month that ye gaed hame wi' yer prayin' frien'?"

"It was the nicht o' a special prayer-meetin' for the state o' Glamerton. I can fin' oot the date frae the kirk-buiks. What am I to do wi' 't whan I hae 't, sir?"

"Gang to the bank the body deals wi', and spier whether a note beirin' the nummer o' thae figures was paid intil 't upo' the Monday followin' that Sunday, and wha paid it. They'll tell ye that at ance."

But for various reasons, which it is needless to give in this history, Thomas was compelled to postpone the execution of his project. And Robert went on buying and selling and getting gain, all unaware of the pit he had digged for himself.

## CHAPTER XIX.

ONE Sunday morning Mr. Cupples was returning from church with Alec.

“Ye likit the sermon the day, Mr. Cupples.”

“What gars ye think that?”

“I saw ye takin’ notes a’ the time.”

“Gleg-eed mole!” said Mr. Cupples. “Luik at the notes as ye ca’ them.”

“Eh! it’s a sang!” exclaimed Alec with delight.

“What cud gar ye think I likit sic havers? The crater was preachin’ till’s ain shaidow. And he pat me into sic an unchristian temper o’ dislike to him and a’ the concern, that I ran to my city o’ refuge. I never gang to the kirk wi’oot it—I mean my pocket-buik. And I tried to gie birth till a sang, the quhilk, like Jove, I conceived i’ my heid last nicht.”

“Lat me luik at it,” said Alec, eagerly.



“Na, ye wadna mak’ either rhyme or rizzon o’ ’t as it stan’s. I’ll read it to ye.”

“Come and sit doon, than, on the ither side o’ the dyke.”

A dyke in Scotland is an earthen fence—to my prejudiced mind, the ideal of fences; because, for one thing, it never keeps anybody out. And not to speak of the wild bees’ bykes in them, with their inexpressible honey, like that of Mount Hymettus—to the recollection of the man, at least—they are covered with grass, and wild flowers grow all about them, through which the wind harps and carps over your head, filling your sense with the odours of a little modest yellow tufty flower, for which I never heard a name in Scotland: the English call it Ladies’ Bedstraw.

They got over the dyke into the field and sat down.

“Ye see it’s no lickit’ eneuch yet,” said Mr. Cupples, and began.

“O lassie, ayont the hill!

Come ower the tap o’ the hill;

Or roun’ the neuk o’ the hill;

For I want ye sair the nicht.

I’m needin’ ye sair the nicht,

For I’m tired and sick o’ mysel’.

A body’s sel’ ’s the sairest weicht.

O lassie, come ower the hill.

Gin a body cud be a thocht o' grace,  
And no a sel' ava!  
I'm sick o' my heid and my han's and my face,  
And my thouchts and mysel' and a'.  
I'm sick o' the warl' and a';  
The licht gangs by wi' a hiss;  
For throu' my een the sunbeams fa',  
But my weary hert they miss.

O lassie, ayont the hill!  
Come ower the tap o' the hill,  
Or roun' the neuk o' the hill,  
For I want ye sair the nicht.

For gin ance I saw yer bonnie heid,  
And the sunlicht o' yer hair,  
The ghaist o' mysel' wad fa' doon deid,  
And I'd be mysel' nae mair.  
I wad be mysel' nae mair,  
Filled o' the sole remeid,  
Slain by the arrows o' licht frae yer hair,  
Killed by yer body and heid.

O lassie, ayont the hill! &c.

But gin ye lo'ed me, ever so sma',  
For the sake o' my bonny dame,  
Whan I cam' to life, as she gaed awa',  
I could bide my body and name.

I nicht bide mysel', the weary same,  
 Aye settin' up its heid,  
 Till I turn frae the claes that cover my frame,  
 As gin they war roun' the deid.  
 O lassie, ayont the hill! &c.

But gin ye lo'ed me as I lo'e you,  
 I wad ring my ain deid knell;  
 My sel' wad vanish, shot through and through  
 By the shine o' your sunny sel'.  
 By the shine o' your sunny sel',  
 By the licht aneath your broo,  
 I wad dee to mysel', and ring my bell,  
 And only live in you.

O lassie, ayont the hill!  
 Come ower the tap o' the hill,  
 Or roun' the neuk o' the hill,  
 For I want ye sair the nicht.  
 I'm needin' ye sair the nicht,  
 For I'm tired and sick o' mysel';  
 A body's sel' 's the sairest weicht!  
 O lassie, come ower the hill."

"Isna it raither metapheesical, Mr. Cupples?"  
 asked Alec.

"Ay is't. But fowk's metapheesical. True, they  
 dinna aye ken 't. I wad to God I cud get that  
 sel' o' mine safe aneath the yird, for it jist torments

the life oot o' me wi' its ugly face. Hit and me jist stan's an' girns at ane anither."

"It'll tak a heap o' Christianity to lay *that* ghaist, Mr. Cupples. That I ken weel. The lassie wadna be able to do 't for ye. It's ower muckle to expec' o' her or ony mortal woman. For the sowl's a temple biggit for the Holy Ghost, and no woman can fill 't, war she the Virgin Mary ower again. And till the Holy Ghost comes intil 's ain hoose, the ghaist that ye speak o' winna gang oot."

A huge form towered above the dyke behind them.

"Ye had no richt to hearken, Thomas Crann," said Mr. Cupples.

"I beg your pardon," returned Thomas; "I never thought o' that. The soun' was sae bonnie, I jist stud and hearkened. I beg your pardon.—But that's no the richt thing for the Sawbath day."

"But ye 're haein' a walk yersel', it seems, Thomas."

"Ay; but I'm gaun ower the hills to my school. An' I maunna bide to claver wi ye, for I hae a guid twa hoors' traivel afore me."

"Come hame wi' us, and hae a mou'fu' o' denner afore ye gang, Thomas," said Alec.

"Na, I thank ye. It does the sowl gude to fast a wee ae day in saiven. I had a piece, though,

afore I cam' awa'. What am I braggin' o'! Gude day to ye."

"That 's an honest man, Alec," said Cupples.

"He is," returned Alec. "But he never will do as other people do."

"Perhaps that 's the source of his honesty—that he walks by an inward light," said Cupples thoughtfully.

The year wore on. Alec grew confident. They returned together to their old quarters. Alec passed his examinations triumphantly, and continued his studies with greater vigour than before. Especially he walked the hospitals with much attention and interest, ever warned by Cupples to beware lest he should come to regard a man as a physical machine, and so grow a mere doctoring machine himself.

Mr. Fraser declined seeing him. The old man was in a pitiable condition, and indeed never lectured again.

Alec no more frequented his old dismal haunt by the sea-shore. The cry of the drowning girl would not have come to him as it would to the more finely nervous constitution of Mr. Cupples; but the cry of a sea-gull, or the wash of the waves, or even the wind across the tops of the sand hills, would have been enough to make him see in every crest which the wind tore white in the

gloamin, the forlorn figure of the girl he loved vanishing from his eyes.

The more heartily he worked, the more did the evil as well as the painful portions of his history recede into the background of his memory, growing more and more like the traces left by a bad, turbid, and sorrowful dream.

Is it true that *all* our experiences will one day revive in entire clearness of outline and full brilliancy of colour, passing before the horror-struck soul to the denial of time, and the assertion of ever present eternity? If so, then God be with us, for we shall need him.

Annie Anderson's great-aunt took to her bed directly after her husband's funeral.

Finding there was much to do about the place, Annie felt no delicacy as to remaining. She worked harder than ever she had worked before, blistered her hands, and browned her fair face and neck altogether autumnally. Her aunt and she together shore (*reaped*) the little field of oats; got the sheaves home and made a rick of them; dug up the potatoes, and covered them in a pit with a blanket of earth; looked after the one cow and calf which gathered the grass along the road and river sides; fed the pigs and the poultry, and even went with a neighbour and his cart to the moss, to howk (*dig*) their winter-store of peats. But this

they found too hard for them, and were forced to give up. Their neighbours, however, provided their fuel, as they had often done in part for old John Peterson.

Before the winter came there was little left to be done ; and Annie saw by her aunt's looks that she wanted to get rid of her. Margaret Anderson had a chronic, consuming sense of poverty, and therefore worshipped with her whole soul the monkey Lars of saving and vigilance. Hence Annie, as soon as Alec was gone, went, with the simplicity belonging to her childlike nature, to see Mrs. Forbes, and returned to Clippenstrae only to bid them good-bye.

The bodily repose and mental activity of the winter formed a strong contrast with her last experiences. But the rainy, foggy, frosty, snowy months passed away much as they had done before, fostering, amongst other hidden growths, that of Mrs. Forbes' love for her semi-protégée, whom, like Castor and Pollux, she took half the year to heaven, and sent the other half to Tartarus. One notable event, however, of considerable importance in its results to the people of Howglen, took place this winter amongst the missionaries of Glamerton.



## CHAPTER XX.

SO entire was Thomas Crann's notion of discipline, that it could not be satisfied with the mere riddance of Robert Bruce. Jealous, therefore, of encroachment on the part of minister or deacons, and opposed by his friend James Johnstone, he communicated his design to no one; for he knew that the higher powers, anxious to avoid scandal wherever possible, would, instead of putting the hypocrite to shame as he deserved, merely send him a civil letter, requesting him to withdraw from their communion. After watching for a fit opportunity, he resolved at length to make his accusation against Robert Bruce in person at an approaching church-meeting, at which, in consequence of the expected discussion of the question of the proper frequency of the administration of the sacrament, a full attendance of members might be expected.

They met in the chapel, which was partially

lighted for the occasion. The night was brilliant with frosty stars, as Thomas walked to the rendezvous. He felt the vigour of the season in his yet unsubdued limbs, but as he watched his breath curling in the frosty air, and then vanishing in the night, he thought how the world itself would pass away before the face of Him that sat on the great white throne; and how the missionars of Glamerton would have nothing to say for themselves on that day, if they did not purify themselves on this. From the faint light of the stars he passed into the dull illumination of the tallow candles, and took his place in silence behind their snuffer, who, though half-witted, had yet shown intelligence and piety enough for admission into the community. The church slowly gathered, and at length Mr. Turnbull appeared, supported by his deacons.

After the usual preliminary devotions, in which Robert Bruce "engaged," the business of the meeting was solemnly introduced. The only part which Thomas Crann took in it was to expostulate with the candle-snuffer, who being violently opposed to the wishes of the minister, and not daring to speak, kept grumbling in no inaudible voice at everything that came from that side of the house.

"Hoot, Richard! it's scriptur', ye ken," said Thomas, soothingly.

"Scriptur' or no scriptur', we're nae for't," growled Richard aloud, and rising, gave vent to his excited feelings by snuffing out and relighting every candle in its turn.

At length the further discussion of the question was postponed to the next meeting, and the minister was preparing to give out a hymn, when Thomas Crann's voice arose in the dusky space. Mr. Turnbull stopped to listen, and there fell an expectant silence; for the stone-mason was both revered and feared. It was too dark to see more than the dim bulk of his figure, but he spoke with slow emphasis, and every word was heard.

"Brethren and office-beirers o' the church, it's upo' discipline that I want to speak. Discipline is ane o' the main objecs for which a church is gathered by the speerit o' God. And we maun work discipline amio' oorsels, or else the rod o' the Almichty 'll come doon upon a' oor backs. I winna haud ye frae particulars ony langer.—Upon a certain Sawbath nicht i' the last year, I gaed into Robert Bruce's hoose, to hae worship wi' 'm.—I'm gaein straucht and fair to the pint at ance. Whan he opened the buik, I saw him slip something oot atween the leaves o' 't, and crunkle 't up in 's han', luikin his greediest. Syne he read the twenty-third and fourt psalms. I cudna help watchin' him, and whan we gaed down upo' oor k-nees, I luikit

roon efter him, and saw him pit something intil 's breck-pooch. Weel, it stack to me. Efterhin (*afterwards*) I fand oot frae the lassie Annie Anderson, that the buik was hers, that auld Mr Cooie had gien 't till her upo' 's deith-bed, and had tell 't her forbye that he had pitten a five poun' note atween the leaves o' 't, to be her ain in remembrance o' him, like. What say ye to that, Robert Bruce?"

"It 's a' a lee," cried Robert, out of the dark back-ground under the gallery, where he always placed himself at such meetings, "gotten up atween yersel' and that ungratefu' cousin o' mine, Jeames Anderson's lass, wha I hae keepit like ane o' my ain."

Bruce had been sitting trembling; but when Thomas put the question, believing that he had heard all that Thomas had to say, and that there was no proof against him, he resolved at once to meet the accusation with a stout denial. Whereupon Thomas resumed:

"Ye hear him deny 't. Weel, I hae seen the said bible mysel'; and there 's this inscription upo' ane o' the blank leaves o' 't: 'Over the twenty-third psalm o' David,'—I tellt ye that he read that psalm that nicht—'Over the twenty-third psalm o' David, I hae laid a five poun' note for my dear Annie Anderson, efter my deith!' Syne followed

the nummer o' the note, which I can shaw them that wants to see. Noo I hae the banker's word for statin' that upo' the very Monday mornin' efter that Sunday, Bruce paid into the bank a five poun' note o' that verra indentical nummer. What say ye to that, Robert Bruce?"

A silence followed. Thomas himself broke it with the words:

"That money he oucht to hae supposed was Mr. Cooie's, and returned it till 's dochters. But he pays 't intil 's ain accoont. Ca' ye na that a breach o' the eicht commandment, Robert Bruce?"

But now Robert Bruce rose. And he spoke with solemnity and pathos.

"It 's a sair thing, sirs, that amo' Christians, wha ca' themsel's a chosen priesthood and a peculiar people, a jined member o' the same church should meet wi' sic ill-guideship as I hae met wi' at the han's o' Mr. Crann. To say naething o' his no bein' ashamed to confess bein' sic a heepocreet i' the sicht o' God as to luik aboot him upon his k-nees, lyin' in wait for a man to do him hurt whan he pretendit to be worshipping wi' him afore the Lord his Maker, to say naething o' that which I wadna hae expeckit o' him, he gangs aboot for auchteen months contrivin' to bring that man to disgrace because he daurna mak' sic a strong profession as he mak's himsel'. But the warst o' t'

a' is, that he beguiles a young thochtless bairn, wha has been the cause o' muckle discomfort in oor hoose, to jine him i' the plot. It 's true eneuch that I took the bank-note frae the bible, whilk was a verra unshuitable place to put the unrichteous mammon intil, and min's me upo' the money-changers i' the temple; and it 's true that I paid it into the bank the neist day——"

"What garred ye deny 't, than?" interrupted Thomas.

"Bide a wee, Mr. Crann, and caw canny. Ye hae been hearkened till wi'oot interruption, and I maun hae fair play here whatever I get frae yersel'. I didna deny the fac. Wha could deny a fac? But I denied a' the haill affair, i' the licht o' wickedness and thievin' that Mr. Crann was castin' upo' 't. I saw that inscription and read it wi' my ain een the verra day the lassie brocht the beuk, and kenned as weel 's Mr. Crann that the siller wasna to be taen hame again. But I said to mysel': 'It 'll turn the lassie's heid, and she 'll jist fling 't awa' in murlocks (*crumbs*) upo' sweeties, and plunky, and sic like,' for she was aye greedy, 'sae I 'll jist pit it into the bank wi' my ain, and accoont for 't efterhin wi' the lave o' her bit siller whan I gie that up intil her ain han's. Noo, Mr. Crann!"

He sat down, and Mr. Turnbull rose.

“My Christian brethren,” he said, “it seems to me that this is not the proper place to discuss such a question. It seems to me likewise ill-judged of Mr. Crann to make such an accusation in public against Mr. Bruce, who, I must say, has met it with a self-restraint and a self-possession most creditable to him, and has answered it in a very satisfactory manner. The hundredth psalm.”

“Hooly and fairly, sir!” exclaimed Thomas, forgetting his manners in his eagerness. “I haena dune yet. And whaur wad be the place to discuss sic a queston but afore a meetin’ o’ the church? Ca’ ye that the public, sir? Wasna the church institute for the sake o’ discipleen? Sic things are no to be ironed oot in a hole an’ a corner, atween you and the deycons, sir. They belang to the haill body. We ’re a’ wranged thegither, and the Holy Ghost, whase temple we sud be, is wranged forby. You at least micht ken, sir, that he ’s withdrawn his presence frae oor mids’, and we are but a candle under a bushel, and not a city set upon a hill. We beir no witness. And the cause o’ his displeesur’ is the accursed thing which the Ahchan in oor camp has hidden i’ the Coonty Bank, forby mony ither causes that come hame to us a’. And the warl’ jist scoffs at oor profession o’ religion, whan it sees sic a man as that in oor mids’.”



“All this is nothing to the point, Mr. Crann,” said Mr. Turnbull in displeasure.

“It’s to the verra hert o’ the pint,” returned Thomas, equally displeased. “Gin Robert Bruce saw the inscription the day the lassie brought hame the buik, will he tell me hoo it was that he cam’ to lea’ the note i’ the buik till that Sawbath nicht?”

“I luikit for ’t, but I cudna fin’ ’t, and thocht she had ta’en ’t oot upo’ the road hame.”

“Cudna ye fin’ the twenty-third psalm?—But jist ae thing mair, Mr. Turnbull, and syne I’ll haud my tongue,” resumed Thomas.—“Jeames Johnstone, will ye rin ower to my hoose, and fess the bible? It’s lyin’ upo’ the drawers. Ye canna mistak’ it.—Jist hae patience till he comes back, sir, and we’ll see hoo Mr. Bruce’ll read the inscription. I wad hae made nothing o’ ’t, gin it hadna been for a frien’ o’ mine. But Mr. Bruce is a scholar, an’ ’ll read the Laitin till ’s.”

By this time James Johnstone was across the street.

“There’s some foul play in this,” cried Bruce, out of the darkness. “My enemy maun sen’ for an ootlandish speech and a heathen tongue to in-snare ane o’ the brethren!”

Profound silence followed. All sat expectant. The snuff of the candles grew longer and longer. Even the energetic Richard, who had opposed the

Scripture single-handed, forgot his duty in the absorbing interest of the moment. Every ear was listening for the footsteps of the returning weaver, bringing the bible of the parish-clergyman into the half-unhallowed precincts of a conventicle. At a slight motion of one of the doors, an audible start of expectation broke like an electric spark from the still people. But nothing came of it. They had to wait full five minutes yet before the messenger returned, bearing the large volume in both hands in front of him.

“Tak’ the buik up to Mr. Turnbull, Jcames, and snuff his can’les,” said Thomas.

James took the snuffers, but Richard started up, snatched them from him, and performed the operation himself with his usual success.

The book being laid on the desk before Mr. Turnbull, Thomas called out into the back region of the chapel,

“Noo, Robert Bruce, come foret, and fin’ oot this inscription that ye ken a’ aboot sae weel, and read it to the church, that they may see what a scholar they hae amo’ them.”

But there was neither voice nor hearing.

After a pause, Mr. Turnbull spoke.

“Mr. Bruce, we’re waiting for you,” he said.  
“Do not be afraid. You shall have justice.”

A dead silence followed the appeal. Presently

some of those furthest back—they were women in hooded cloaks and *mutches*—spoke in scarce audible voices.

“He’s no here, sir. We canna see him,” they said.

The minister could not distinguish their words.

“No here!” cried Thomas, who, deaf as he was, had heard them. “He was here a minute ago! His conscience has spoken at last. He’s fa’en doon, like Ananias, i’ the seat.”

Richard snatched a candle out of the candelabrum, and went to look. Others followed similarly provided. They searched the pew where he had been sitting, and the neighbouring pews, and the whole chapel, but he was nowhere to be found.

“That wad hae been him, whan I heard the door bang,” they said to each other at length.

And so it was. For perceiving how he had committed himself, he had slipped down in the pew, crawled on all fours to the door, and got out of the place unsuspected.

A formal sentence of expulsion was passed upon him by a show of hands, and the word *Expelled* was written against his name in the list of church-members.

“Thomas Crann, will you engage in prayer?” said Mr. Turnbull.

“Na, nae the nicht,” answered Thomas. “I’m like ane under the auld law that had been buryin’ the deid. I hae been doin’ necessar’ but foul wark, and I’m defiled in consequence. I’m no in a richt speerit to pray in public. I maun awa’ hame to my prayers. I houp I mayna do something mysel’ afore lang that’ll mak’ it necessar’ for ye to dismiss me neist. But gin that time sud come, spare not, I beseech ye.”

So, after a short prayer from Mr. Turnbull, the meeting separated in a state of considerable excitement. Thomas half expected to hear of an action for libel, but Robert knew better than venture upon that. Besides, no damages could be got out of Thomas.

When Bruce was once outside the chapel, he assumed the erect posture to which his claim was entirely one of species, and went home by circuitous ways. He found the shop still open, attended by his wife.

“Preserve’s, Robert! what’s come ower ye?” she exclaimed.

“I had sic a sair heid (*headache*), I was forced to come oot afore a’ was dune,” he answered. “I dinna think I’ll gang ony mair, for they dinna conduc’ things a’thegither to my likin’. I winna fash mair wi’ them.”

His wife looked at him anxiously, perhaps with

some vague suspicion of the truth; but she said nothing, and I do not believe the matter was ever alluded to between them. The only indications remaining the next day of what he had gone through that evening, consisted in an increase of suavity towards his grown customers, and of acerbity towards the children who were unfortunate enough to enter his shop.

Of the two, however, perhaps Thomas Crann was the more unhappy as he went home that night. He felt nothing of the elation which commonly springs from success in a cherished project. He had been the promoter and agent in the downfall of another man, and although the fall was a just one, and it was better too for the man to be down than standing on a false pedestal, Thomas could not help feeling the reaction of a fellow-creature's humiliation. Now that the thing was done, and the end gained, the eternal brotherhood asserted itself, and Thomas pitied Bruce and mourned over him. He must be to him henceforth as a heathen man and a publican, and he was sorry for him. "Ye see," he said to himself, "it's no like a slip or a sin; but an evil disease cleaveth fast unto him, and there's sma' chance o' him ever repentin' noo. A'thing has been dune for him that can be dune."

Yet Thomas worshipped a God, who, if the

theories Thomas held were correct, could at once, by a free gift of the Holy Spirit, generate repentance in Bruce, and so make him fit for salvation; but who, Thomas believed, would not do so—at all events, *might* not do so—keeping him alive for ever in howling unbelief instead.

Scarcely any of the “members” henceforth saluted Bruce in the street. None of them traded with him, except two or three who owed him a few shillings, and could not pay him. And the modifying effect upon the week’s returns was very perceptible. This was the only form in which a recognizable vengeance could have reached him. To escape from it, he had serious thoughts of leaving the place, and setting up in some remote village.

## CHAPTER XXI.

NOTWITHSTANDING Alec's diligence and the genial companionship of Mr. Cupples—whether the death of Kate, or his own illness, or the reaction of shame after his sojourn in the tents of wickedness, had opened dark visions of the world of reality lying in awful *unknownness* around the life he seemed to know, I cannot tell,—cold isolations would suddenly seize upon him, wherein he would ask himself—that oracular cave in which one hears a thousand questions before one reply—“What is the use of it all—this study and labour?” And he interpreted the silence to mean: “Life is worthless. There is no glow in it—only a glimmer and shine at best.”—Will my readers set this condition down as one of disease? If they do, I ask, “Why should a man be satisfied with anything such as was now within the grasp of Alec Forbes?” And if they reply that a higher ambition would have set him at peace if not at rest, I only say that they would be



nearer health if they had his disease. Pain is not malady : it is the revelation of malady—the meeting and recoil between the unknown death and the unknown life ; that jar of the system whereby the fact becomes known to the man that he is ill. There was disease in Alec, but the disease did not lie in his dissatisfaction. It lay in that poverty of life with which those are satisfied who call such discontent disease. Such disease is the first flicker of the aurora of a rising health.

This state of feeling, however, was only occasional ; and a reviving interest in anything belonging to his studies, or a merry talk with Mr. Cupples, would dispel it for a time, just as a breath of fine air will give the sense of perfect health to one dying of consumption.

But what made these questionings develope into the thorns of a more definite self-condemnation—the advanced guard sometimes of the roses of peace—was simply this :

He had written to his mother for money to lay out upon superior instruments, and new chemical apparatus ; and his mother had replied sadly that she was unable to send it. She hinted that his education had cost more than she had expected. She told him that she was in debt to Robert Bruce, and had of late been compelled to delay the payment of its interest. She informed him also that,

even under James Dow's conscientious management, there seemed little ground for hoping that the farm would ever make a return correspondent to the large outlay his father had made upon it.

This letter stung Alec to the heart. That his mother should be in the power of such a man as Bruce, was bad enough ; but that she should have been exposed for his sake to the indignity of requesting his forbearance, seemed unendurable. To despise the man was no satisfaction, the right and the wrong being where they were.—And what proportion of the expenses of last session had gone to his college-accounts ?

He wrote a humble letter to his mother—and worked still harder. For although he could not make a shilling at present, the future had hope in it.

Meantime Mr. Cupples, in order that he might bear such outward signs of inward grace as would appeal to the perceptions of the Senatus, got a new hat, and changed his shabby tail-coat for a black frock. His shirt ceased to be a hypothesis to account for his collar, and became a real hypostasis, evident and clean. These signs of improvement led to inquiries on the part of the Senatus, and the result was that, before three months of the session were over, he was formally installed as librarian. His first impulse on receiving the good

news was to rush down to Luckie Cumstie's and have a double-tumbler. But conscience was too strong for Satan, and sent him home to his pipe—which, it must be confessed, he smoked twice as much as before his reformation.

From the moment of his appointment, he seemed to regard the library as his own private property, or, rather, as his own family. He was grandfather to the books: at least a grandfather shows that combination of parent and servant which comes nearest to the relation he henceforth manifested towards them. Most of them he gave out graciously; some of them grudgingly; a few of them with much reluctance; but all of them with injunctions to care, and special warnings against forcing the backs, crumpling or folding the leaves, and making thumb-marks.

“Noo,” he would say to some country bejan, “tak’ the buik i’ yer han’s no as gin ’twar a neip (*turnip*), but as gin ’twar the sowl o’ a new-born bairn. Min’ ye it has to sair (*serve*) mony a generation efter your banes lie bare i’ the moul’, an’ ye maun hae respec’ to them that come efter ye, and no ill-guide their fare. I beg ye winna guddle ’t (*mangle it*).”

The bejans used to laugh at him in consequence. But long before they were magistrands, the best of them had a profound respect for the librarian. Not a few of them repaired to him with all their

difficulties ; and such a general favourite was he, that any story of his humour or oddity was sure to be received with a roar of loving laughter. Indeed I doubt whether, within the course of a curriculum, Mr. Cupples had not become the real centre of intellectual and moral life in that college.

One evening, as he and Alec were sitting together speculating on the speediest mode of turning Alec's acquirements to money-account, their landlady entered.

"Here's my cousin," she said, "Captain McTavish o' the *Sea-horse*, Mr. Forbes, wha says that afore lang he 'll be wantin' a young doctor to gang and haud the scurvy aff o' his men at the whaul-fishin'. Sae of coorse I thought o' my ain first, and ran up the stair to you. It 'll be fifty poun' i' yer pooch, and a plenty o' rouch ploys that the like o' you young fallows likes, though I canna say I wad like sic things mysel'. Only I'm an auld-wife ye see, and that maks the differ."

"Nae that auld, Mistress Leslie," said Cupples, "gin ye wadna lee."

"Tell Captain McTavish that I 'll gang," said Alec, who had hesitated no longer that the time Mr. Cupples took to say the word of kind flattery to their landlady.

"He 'll want testimonials, ye ken."

"Wadna ye gie me ane, Mrs. Leslie?"

“Deed wad I, gin ’t war o’ ony accoont. Ye see, Mr. Alec, the day’s no yesterday; and this session’s no the last.”

“Haud yer tongue, and dinna rub a sair place,” cried Mr. Cupples.

“I beg yer pardon,” returned Mrs. Leslie, submissively.

Alec followed her down the stair.

He soon returned, his eyes flashing with delight. Adventure! And fifty pounds to take to his mother!

“All right, Mr. Cupples. The Captain has promised to take me if my testimonials are satisfactory. I think they will give me good ones now. If it were n’t for you, I should have been lying in the gutter instead of walking the quarter-deck.”

“Weel, weel, bantam. There’s twa sides to maist obligations.—I’m leebrarian.”

The reader may remember that in his boyhood Alec was fond of the sea, had rigged a flagstaff, and had built the *Bonnie Annie*. He was nearly beside himself with delight, which continued unjarred until he heard from his mother. She had too much good sense to make any opposition, but she could not prevent her anticipations of loss and loneliness from appearing. His mother’s trouble quelled the exuberance of Alec’s spirits without altering his resolve. He would return to her in the fall of

the year, bringing with him what would ease her mind of half its load.

There was no check at the examinations this session.

## CHAPTER XXII.

MRS. FORBES was greatly perplexed about Annie. She could not bear the thought of turning her out; and besides she did not see where she was to go, for she could not be in the house with young Bruce. On the other hand, she had still the same dangerous sense of worldly duty as to the prevention of a so-called unsuitable match, the chance of which was more threatening than ever. For Annie had grown very lovely, and having taken captive the affections of the mother, must put the heart of the son in dire jeopardy. But Alec arrived two days before he was expected, and delivered his mother from her perplexity by declaring that if Annie were sent away he too would leave the house. He had seen through the maternal precautions the last time he was at home, and talking with Cupples about it, who secretly wished for no better luck than that Alec should fall in love with Annie, had his feelings strengthened as



to the unkindness, if not injustice, of throwing her periodically into such a dungeon as the society of the Bruces. So Annie remained where she was, much, I must confess, to her inward content.

The youth and the maiden met every day—the youth unembarrassed, and the maiden reserved and shy, even to the satisfaction of the mother. But if Alec could have seen the loving thoughts which, like threads of heavenly gold (for all the gold of heaven is invisible), wrought themselves into the garments she made for him, I do not think *he* could have helped falling in love with her, although most men, I fear, would only have fallen the more in love with themselves, and cared the less for her. But he did not see them, or hear the divine measures to which her needle flew, as she laboured to arm him against the cold of those regions

Where all life dies, death lives, and nature breeds  
Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things.

Alec's college-life had interposed a gulf between him and his previous history. But his approaching departure into places unknown and a life untried, operated upon his spiritual condition like the approach of death; and he must strengthen again all the old bonds which had been stretched thin by time and absence; he must make righteous atonement for the wrong of neglect; in short, he must

set his inward house in order, ere he went forth to the abodes of ice. Death is not a breaker but a renewer of ties. And if in view of death we gird up the loins of our minds, and unite our hearts into a whole of love, and tenderness, and atonement, and forgiveness, then Death himself cannot be that thing of forlornness and loss.

He took a day to go and see Curly, and spent a pleasant afternoon with him, recalling the old times, and the old stories, and the old companions; for the youth with the downy chin has a past as ancient as that of the man with the gray beard. And Curly told him the story of his encounter with young Bruce on the bank of the Wan Water. And over and over again Annie's name came up, but Curly never hinted at her secret.

The next evening he went to see Thomas Crann. Thomas received him with a cordiality amounting even to gruff tenderness.

"I 'm richt glaid to see ye," he said; "and I tak' it verra kin' o' ye, wi' a' yer gran' learnin' to come and see an ignorant man like me. But Alec, my man, there 's some things 'at I ken better nor ye ken them yet. Him that made the whauls is better worth seekin' nor the whauls themsel's. God's works may swallow the man that follows them, but God himsel' 's the hidin'-place frae the the wind, and the covert frae the tempest. Set

na up nae fause God—that 's the thing 'at ye lo'e best, ye ken—for like Dawgon, it 'll fa', and maybe brain ye i' the fa'. Come doon upo' yer knees wi' me, and I 'll pray for ye. But ye maun pray for yersel', or my prayers winna be o' muckle avail : ye ken that."

Yielding to the spiritual power of Thomas, whose gray-blue eyes were flashing with fervour, Alec kneeled down as he was desired, and Thomas said :

"O thou who madest the whales to play i' the great watters, and gavest unto men sic a need o' licht that they maun hunt the leviathan to haud their lamps burnin' at nicht whan thou hast sent thy sun awa' to ither lands, be thou roon' aboot this youth, wha surely is nae muckle waur than him 'at the Saviour lo'ed ; and when thou seest his ship gang sailin' into the far north whaur thou keepest thy stores o' frost and snaw ready to remin' men o' thy goodness by takin' the heat frae them for a sizzon—when thou seest his ship gaein far north, pit doon thy finger, O Lord, and straik a track afore 't, throu' amo' the hills o' ice, that it may gang throu' in saf-ety, even as thy chosen people gaed throu' the Reid Sea, and the river o' Jordan. For, Lord, we want him hame again in thy good time. For he is the only son of his mother, and she is a widow. But aboon a', O Lord, elec' him to thy

grace, and lat him ken the glory o' God, even the licht o' thy coontenance. For me, I 'm -a' thine, to live or dee, and I care not which. For I hae gotten the gueed o' this warl'; and gin I binna ready for the neist, it 's because o' my sins; and no o' my savours. For I wad glaidly depairt and be with the Lord. But this young man has never seen thy face; and, O Lord, I 'm jist feared that my coontenance micht fa' even in thy kingdom, gin I kent that Alec Forbes was doon i' the ill place. Spare him, O Lord, and gie him time for repentance gin he has a chance; but gin he has nane, tak' him at ance, that his doom may be the licht.

Alec rose with a very serious face, and went home to his mother in a mood more concordant with her feelings than the lightheartedness with which he generally tried to laugh away her apprehensions.

He even called on Robert Bruce, at his mother's request. It went terribly against the grain with him though. He expected to find him rude as of old, but he was, on the contrary, as pleasant as a man could be whose only notion of politeness lay in *licking*.

His civility came from two sources—the one hope, the other fear. Alec was going away and might never return. That was the hope. For although Bruce had spread the report of Annie's engagement to Curly, he believed that Alec was

the real obstacle to his plans. At the same time he was afraid of him, believing in his cowardly mind that Alec would not stop short of personal reprisals if he should offend him; and now he was a great six-foot fellow, of whose prowess at college confused and exaggerated stories were floating about the town.—Bruce was a man who could hatch and cherish plans, keeping one in reserve behind the other, and beholding their result from afar.

“Ay! ay! Mr. Forbes—sae ye ’re gaun awa’ amo’ the train-ile, are ye? Hae ye ony share i’ the tak’ no?”

“I don’t think the doctor has any share,” answered Alec.

“But I warran’ ye’ll put to yer han’, and help at the catchin’.”

“Very likely.”

“Weel, gin ye come in for a barrel or twa, ye may coont upo’ me to tak it aff yer han’, at the ordinar’ price—to the *wholesale* merchan’s, ye ken—wi’ maybe a sma’ discoont for orderin’ ’t afore the whaul was ta’en.”

The day drew near. He had bidden all his friends farewell. He must go just as the spring was coming in with the old well-beloved green borne before her on the white banner of the snow-drop, and following in miles of jubilation: he must not wait for her triumph, but speed away

before her towards the dreary north, which only a few of her hard-riding pursuivants would ever reach. For green hills he must have opal-hued bergs—for green fields the outspread slaty waters, rolling in the delight of their few weeks of glorious freedom, and mocking the unwieldy ice-giants that rush in wind-driven troops across their plains, or welter captive in the weary swell, and melt away beneath the low summer sun.

His mother would have gone to see him on board, but he prevailed upon her to say good-bye to him at home. She kept her tears till after he was gone. Annie bade him farewell with a pale face, and a smile that was all sweetness and no gladness. She did not weep even afterwards. A gentle cold hand pressed her heart down, so that neither blood reached her face nor water her eyes. She went about everything just as before, because it had to be done; but it seemed foolish to do anything. The spring might as well stay away for any good that it promised either of them.

As Mr. Cupples was taking his farewell on board, "Ye'll gang and see my mother?" said Alec.

"Ay, ay, bantam; I'll do that.—Noo tak care o' yersel; and dinna tak leeberties wi' behemoth. Put a ring in's nose gin ye like, only haud oot ower frae's tail. He's no mowse (*not to be meddled with*)."

So away went Alec northwards, over the blue-gray waters, surgeon of the strong barque *Sea-horse*.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

TWO days after Alec's departure, Mr. Bruce called at Howglen to see Annie.

"Hoo are ye, Mistress Forbes? Hoo are ye, Miss Anderson? I was jist comin' ower the watter for a walk, and I thocht I micht as weel fess the bit siller wi' me that I'm awin ye."

Annie stared. She did not know what he meant. He explained.

"It's weel on till a towmon (*twelvemonth*) that ye hae had neither bite nor sup aneath my heumble riggin-tree (*rooftree*), and as that was the upmak for the interest, I maun pay ye the tane seein' ye winna accep' o' the tither. I hae jist brocht ye ten poun' to pit i' yer ain pooch i' the meantime."

Annie could hardly believe her ears. Could she be the rightful owner of such untold wealth? Without giving her time to say anything, however,

Bruce went on, still holding in his hand the dirty bunch of one-pound notes.

“But I’m thinkin’ the best way o’ disposin’ o’ ’t, wad be to lat me put it to the lave o’ the prencipal. Sae I’ll jist tak it to the bank as I gang back. I canna gie ye onything for ’t, ’cause that wad be brakin’ the law against compoon interest, but I can mak’ it up some ither gait, ye ken.”

But Annie had been too much pleased at the prospect of possession to let the money go so easily.

“I hae plenty o’ ways o’ spen’in’ ’t,” she said, “withoot wastry. Sae I’ll jist tak’ it mysel’, and thank ye, Mr. Bruce.”

She rose and took the notes from Bruce’s unwilling hand. He was on the point of replacing them in his trowsers-pocket and refusing to give them up, when her promptitude rescued them. Discomfiture was manifest in his reluctant eyes, and the little tug of retraction with which he loosed his hold upon the notes. He went home mortified, and poverty-stricken, but yet having gained a step towards a further end.

Annie begged Mrs. Forbes to take the money.

“I have no use for it, ma’am. An old gown of yours makes as good a frock for me as I can ever want to have.”

But Mrs. Forbes would not even take charge of

the money—partly from the pride of beneficence, partly from the fear of involving it in her own straits. So that Annie, having provided herself with a few necessaries, felt free to spend the rest as she would. How she longed for Tibbie Dyster! But not having her, she went to Thomas Crann, and offered the money to him.

“’Deed no, lassie! I winna lay a finger upo’ ’t. Lay ’t by till ye want it yersel’.”

“Dinna ye ken somebody that wants ’t mair nor me, Thomas?”

Now Thomas had just been reading a few words spoken, according to Matthew, the tax-gatherer, by the King of Men, declaring the perfection of God to consist in his giving good things to all alike, whether they love him or not. And when Annie asked the question, he remembered the passage and Peter Peterson together. But he could not trust her to follow her own instincts, and therefore went with her to see the poor fellow, who was in a consumption, and would never drink any more. When he saw his worn face, and the bones with hands at the ends of them, his heart smote him that he had ever been harsh to him; and although he had gone with the intention of rousing him to a sense of his danger beyond the grave, he found that for very pity he could not open the prophetic mouth. From self-accusation he took shelter be-

hind Annie, saying to himself : "Babes can best declare what 's best revealed to them;" and left Peter to her ministrations.

A little money went far to make his last days comfortable; and ere she had been visiting him for more than a month, he loved her so that he was able to believe that God might love him, though he knew perfectly (wherein perhaps his drunkenness had taught him more than the prayers of many a pharisee) that he could not deserve it.

This was the beginning of a new relation between Annie and the poor of Glamerton. And the soul of the maiden grew and blossomed into divine tenderness, for it was still more blessed to give than to receive. But she was only allowed to taste of this blessedness, for she had soon to learn that even giving itself must be given away cheerfully.

After three months Bruce called again with the quarter's interest. Before the next period arrived he had an interview with James Dow, to whom he represented that, as he was now paying the interest down in cash, he ought not to be exposed to the inconvenience of being called upon at any moment to restore the principal, but should have the money secured to him for ten years. After consultation, James Dow consented to a three years'

loan, beyond which he would not yield. Papers to this effect were signed, and one quarter's interest more was placed in Annie's willing hand.

In the middle of summer Mr. Cupples made his appearance, and was warmly welcomed. He had at length completed his catalogue of the library, had got the books arranged to his mind, and was brimful of enjoyment. He ran about the fields like a child; gathered bunches of white clover; made a great kite, and bought an unmeasureable length of string, with which he flew it the first day the wind was worthy of the honour; got out Alec's boat, and upset himself in the Glamour; was run away with by one of the plough-horses in the attempt to ride him to the water; was laughed at and loved by everybody about Howglen. At length, that is, in about ten days, he began to settle down into sobriety of demeanour. The first thing that sobered him was a hint of yellow upon a field of oats. He began at once to go and see the people of Glamerton, and called upon Thomas Crann first.

He found him in one of his gloomy moods, which however were much less frequent than they had been.

"Hoo are ye, auld frien'?" said Cupples.

"Auld as ye say, sir, and nae muckle farrer on nor whan I begud. I whiles think I hae profited

less than onybody I ken. But eh, sir, I wad be sorry, gin I was you, to dee afore I had gotten a glimp o' the face o' God."

"Hoo ken ye that I haena gotten a glimp o' that same?"

"Ye wad luik mair solemn like," answered Thomas.

"Maybe I wad," responded Cupples, seriously.

"Man, strive to get it. Gie Him no rist, day nor nicht, till ye get it. Knock, knock, knock, till it be opened till ye."

"Weel, Thomas, ye dinna seem sae happy yersel', efter a'. Dinna ye think ye may be like ane that 's tryin' to see the face o' whilk ye speyk throu a crack i' the door, in place o' haein patience till it 's opened?"

But the suggestion was quite lost upon Thomas, who, after a gloomy pause, went on.

"Sin 's sic an awfu' thing," he began; when the door opened, and in walked James Dow.

His entrance did not interrupt Thomas, however.

"Sin 's sic an awfu' thing! And I hae sinned sae aften and sae lang, that maybe He 'll be forced efter a' to sen' me to the bottomless pit."

"Hoot, hoot, Thamas! dinna speyk sic awfu' things," said Dow. "They 're dreadfu' to hearken till. I s' warran' He 's as kin'-hertit as yersel'."

James had no reputation for piety, though

much for truthfulness and honesty. Nor had he any idea how much lay in the words he had hastily uttered. A light-gleam grew and faded on Thomas's face.

"I said, he micht be *forced* to sen' me efter a'."

"What, Thomas!" cried Cupples. "He *cudna* save ye! Wi' the Son and the Speerit to help him? And a willin' hert in you forbye? Fegs! ye hae a greater opinion o' Sawtan nor I gied ye the discredit o'."

"Na, na; it's nae Sawtan. It's mysel'. I wadna lay mair wyte (*blame*) upo' Sawtan's shouthers, nor 's his ain. He has eneuch already, puir fallow!"

"Ye'll be o' auld Robbie Burns's opinion, that he 'aiblins micht still hae a stake.'"

"Na, na; he has nane. Burns was nae prophet."

"But jist suppose, Thomas—gin the de'il war to repent."

"Man!" exclaimed the stonemason, rising to his full height with slow labour after the day's toil, "it wad be cruel to gar *him* repent. It wad be ower sair upon him. Better kill him. The bitterness o' sic repentance wad be ower terrible. It wad be mair nor he cud bide. It wad brak his hert a'thegither.—Na, na, he has nae chance."



The last sentence was spoken quickly and with attempted carelessness as he resumed his seat.

“Hoo ken ye that?” asked Cupples.

“There’s no sic word i’ the Scriptur’.”

“Do ye think He maun tell *us* a’thing?”

“We hae nae richt to think onything that He doesna tell’s.”

“I’m nae sae sure o’ that, Thomas. Maybe, whiles, he doesna tell’s a thing jist to gar’s think aboot it, and be ready for the time whan he will tell’s.”

Thomas was silent for a few moments. Then, with a smile—rather a grim one—he said,

“Here’s a curious thing, no.—There’s neyther o’ you convertit, and yet yer words strenthen my hert as gin they cam frae the airt (*region*) aboon.”

But his countenance changed, and he added hastily,

“It’s a mark o’ indwellin’ sin. To the law and to the testimony—Gang awa’ and lat me to my prayers.”

They obeyed; for either they felt that nothing but his prayers would do, or they were awed, and dared not remain.

Mr. Cupples could wait. Thomas could not.

The Forlorn Hope of men must storm the walls of Heaven.

Amongst those who sit down at the gate till one shall come and open it, are to be found both the wise and the careless children.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

**M**R. CUPPLES returned to his work, for the catalogue had to be printed.

The weeks and months passed on, and the time drew nigh when it would be no folly to watch the mail-coach in its pride of scarlet and gold, as possibly bearing the welcome letter announcing Alec's return. At length, one morning, Mrs. Forbes said :

“We may look for him every day now, Annie.”

She did not know with what a tender echo her words went roaming about in Annie's bosom, awaking a thousand thought-birds in the twilight land of memory, which had tucked their heads under their wings to sleep, and thereby to live.

But the days went on and the hope was deferred. The rush of the *Sea-horse* did not trouble the sands of the shallow bar, or sweep, with fiercely ramping figure-head, past the long pier-spike, stretching like the hand of welcome from the hospitable shore. While they fancied her full-breasted sails, swelled

as with sighs for home, bowing lordly over the submissive waters, the *Sea-horse* lay a frozen mass, changed by the might of the winds and the snow and the frost into the grotesque ice-gaunt phantom of a ship, through which, the winter long, the winds would go whistling and raving, crowding upon it the snow and the crystal icicles, all in the wild waste of the desert north, with no ear to hear the sadness, and no eye to behold the deathly beauty.

At length the hope deferred began to make the heart sick. Dim anxiety passed into vague fear, and then deepened into dull conviction, over which ever and anon flickered a pale ghostly hope, like the *fatuus* over the swamp that has swallowed the unwary wanderer. Each would find the other wistfully watching to read any thought that might have escaped the vigilance of its keeper, and come up from the dungeon of the heart to air itself on the terraces of the face ; and each would drop the glance hurriedly, as if caught in a fault. But the moment came when their meeting eyes were fixed and they burst into tears, each accepting the other's confession of hopeless grief as the seal of doom.

I will not follow them through the slow shadows of gathering fate. I will not record the fancies that tormented them, or describe the blank that fell upon the duties of the day. I will not tell how, as the winter drew on, they heard his voice

calling in the storm for help, or how through the snow-drifts they saw him plodding wearily home. His mother forgot her debt, and ceased to care what became of herself. Annie's anxiety settled into an earnest prayer that she might not rebel against the will of God.

But the anxiety of Thomas Crann was not limited to the earthly fate of the lad. It extended to his fate in the other world—too probably, in his eyes, that endless, yearless, undivided fate, wherein the breath still breathed into the soul of man by his Maker is no longer the breath of life, but the breath of infinite death—

Sole Positive of Night,  
Antipathist of Light,

giving to the ideal darkness a real and individual hypostasis in helpless humanity, keeping men alive that the light in them may continue to be darkness.

Terrible were his agonies in wrestling with God for the life of the lad, and terrible his fear lest his own faith should fail him if his prayers should not be heard. Alec Forbes was to Thomas Crann as it were the representative of all his unsaved brothers and sisters of the human race, for whose sakes he, like the Apostle Paul, would have gladly undergone what he dreaded for them. He went

to see his mother; said "Hoo are ye, mem?" sat down; never opened his lips, except to utter a few commonplaces; rose, and left her—a little comforted. Nor can anything but human sympathy alleviate the pain while it obscures not the presence of human grief. Do not remind me that the divine is better. I know it. But why?—Because the divine is the highest—the creative human. The sympathy of the Lord himself is the more human that it is divine.

And in Annie's face, as she ministered to her friend, shone, notwithstanding her full share in the sorrow, a light that came not from sun or star—as it were a suppressed, waiting light. And Mrs. Forbes felt the holy influences that proceeded both from her and from Thomas Crann.

How much easier it is to bear a trouble that comes upon a trouble than one that intrudes a death's head into the midst of a merry-making! Mrs. Forbes scarcely felt it a trouble when she received a note from Robert Bruce informing her that, as he was on the point of removing to another place which offered great advantages for the employment of the little money he possessed, he would be obliged to her to pay as soon as possible the hundred pounds she owed him, along with certain arrears of interest specified. She wrote that it was impossible for her at present, and forgot

the whole affair. But within three days she received a formal application for the debt from a new solicitor. To this she paid no attention, just wondering what would come next. After about three months a second application was made, according to legal form; and in the month of May a third arrived, with the hint from the lawyer that his client was now prepared to proceed to extremities; whereupon she felt for the first time that she must do something.

She sent for James Dow.

"Are you going to the market to-day, James?" she asked.

"'Deed am I, mem."

"Well, be sure and go into one of the tents, and have a good dinner."

"'Deed, mem, I'll do naething o' the sort. It's a sin and a shame to waste gude siller upo' broth an' beef. I'll jist pit a piece (*of oatcake*) in my pooch, and that'll fess me hame as well 's a' their kail. I can bide onything but wastrie."

"It's very foolish of you, James."

"It's yer pleesur to say sae, mem."

"Well, tell me what to do about that."

And she handed him the letter.

James took it and read it slowly. Then he stared at his mistress. Then he read it again. At length, with a bewildered look, he said,



"Gin ye awe the siller, ye maun pay 't, mem."

"But I can't."

"The Lord preserve's! What's to be dune? I hae bit thirty poun' hained (*saved*) up i' my kist. That wadna gang far."

"No, no, James," returned his mistress. "I am not going to take your money to pay Mr. Bruce."

"He 's an awfu' cratur that, mem. He wad tak the win'in' sheet aff o' the deid."

"Well, I must see what can be done. I'll go and consult Mr. Gibb."

James took his leave, dejected on his mistress's account, and on his own. As he went out, he met Annie.

"Eh, Annie!" he said; "this is awfu'."

"What's the matter, Dooie?"

"That schochlin' (*waddling, mean*) cratur, Bruce, is mintin' (*threatening*) at roupin' the mistress for a wheen siller she 's aucht him."

"He daurna!" exclaimed Annie.

"He'll\* daur onything but tyne (*lose*) siller. Eh! lassie, gin we hadna len' 't him yours!"

"I'll gang till him directly. But dinna tell the mistress. She wadna like it."

"Na, na. I's haud my tongue, I's warran'. —Ye're the best cratur ever was born. She'll maybe perswaud the ill-faured tyke (*dog*)."

Murmuring the last two sentences to himself he walked away.

When Annie entered Bruce's shop, the big spider was unoccupied, and ready to devour her. He put on therefore his most gracious reception.

"Hoo are ye, Miss Anderson? I'm glaid to see ye. Come benn the hoose."

"No, I thank ye. I want to speak to yersel', Mr. Bruce. What's a' this about Mrs. Forbes and you?"

"Grit fowk maunna ride ower the tap o' puir fowk like me, Miss Anderson."

"She's a widow, Mr. Bruce"—Annie could not add "and childless"—"and lays nae claim to be great fowk. It's no a Christian way o' treatin' her."

"Fowk *maun* hae their ain. It's mine, and I maun hae't. There's naething agen that i' the ten tables. There's nae gospel for no giein' fowk their ain. I'm nae a missionar noo. I dinna haud wi' sic things. I canna beggar my faimily to haud up her muckle hoose. She maun pay me, or I'll tak' it."

"Gin ye do, Mr. Bruce, ye s' no hae my siller ae minute efter the time's up; and I'm sorry ye hae't till than."

"That's neither here nor there. Ye wad be wantin' 't or that time only hoo."

Now Bruce had given up the notion of leaving Glamerton, for he had found that the patronage of the missionars in grocery was not essential to a certain measure of success; and he had no intention of proceeding to an auction of Mrs. Forbes's goods, for he saw that would put him in a worse position with the public than any amount of quiet practice in lying and stealing. But there was every likelihood of Annie's being married some day; and then her money would be recalled, and he would be left without the capital necessary for carrying on his business upon the same enlarged scale—seeing he now supplied many of the little country shops. It would be a grand move then, if, by a far-sighted generalship, a careful copying of the example of his great ancestor, he could get a permanent hold of some of Annie's property.—Hence had come the descent upon Mrs. Forbes, and here came its success.

“Ye s' hae as muckle o' mine to yer nainsel' as'll clear Mrs. Forbes,” said Annie.

“Weel. Verra weel.—But ye see that's mine for twa year and a half ony gait. That wad only amunt to losin' her interest for twa year an' a half—a'thegither. That winna do.”

“What will do, than, Mr. Bruce?”

“I dinna ken. I want my ain.”

“But ye maunna torment her, Mr. Bruce. Ye ken that.”

“Weel! I’m open to onything rizzonable. There’s the enterest for twa an’ a half—ca’ ’t three year—at what I could mak’ o’ ’t—say aucht per cent—four and twenty poun’. Syne there’s her arrcars o’ interest—and syne there’s the loss o’ the ower-turn—and syne there’s the loss o’ the siller that ye winna hae to len’ me.—Gin ye gie me a quittance for a hunner an’ fifty poun’, I’ll gie her a receipt.—It’ll be a sair loss to me!”

“Onything ye like,” said Annie.

And Bruce brought out papers already written by his lawyer, one of which he signed and the other she.

“Ye’ll min’,” he added, as she was leaving the shop, “that I hae to pay ye no interest noo excep’ upo’ fifty poun’?”

He had paid her nothing for the last half year at least.

He would not have dared to fleece the girl thus, had she had any legally constituted guardians; or had those who would gladly have interfered, had power to protect her. But he took care so to word the quittance, that in the event of any thing going wrong, he might yet claim his hundred pounds from Mrs. Forbes.

Annie read over the receipt, and saw that she had involved herself in a difficulty. How would Mrs. Forbes take it? She begged Bruce not to tell

her, and he was ready enough to consent. He did more. He wrote to Mrs. Forbes to the effect that, upon reflection, he had resolved to drop further proceedings for the present; and when she carried him a half-year's interest, he took it in silence, justifying himself on the ground that the whole transaction was of doubtful success, and he must therefore secure what he could secure.

As may well be supposed, Annie had very little money to give away now; and this subjected her to a quite new sense of suffering.

## CHAPTER XXV.

IT was a dreary wintry summer to all at Howglen. Why should the ripe corn wave deep-dyed in the gold of the sunbeams, when Alec lay frozen in the fields of ice, or sweeping about under them like a broken sea-weed in the waters so cold, so mournful? Yet the work of the world must go on. The corn must be reaped. Things must be bought and sold. Even the mourners must eat and drink. The stains which the day had gathered must be washed from the brow of the morning; and the dust to which Alec had gone down must be swept from the chair in which he had been wont to sit. So things did go on—of themselves as it were, for no one cared much about them, although it was the finest harvest that year that Howglen had ever borne. It had begun at length to appear that the old labour had not been cast into a dead grave, but into a living soil, like that of which Sir Philip Sidney says in his sixty-fifth psalm :

“ Each clodd relenteth at thy dressing,”

as if it were a human soul that had bethought itself and began to bring forth fruit.—This might be the beginning of good things. But what did it matter?

Annie grew paler, but relaxed not a single effort to fill her place. She told her poor friends that she had no money now, and could not help them; but most were nearly as glad to see her as before; while one of them who had never liked receiving alms from a girl in such a lowly position, as well as some who had always taken them thankfully, loved her better when she had nothing to give.

She renewed her acquaintance with Peter Whaup, the blacksmith, through his wife, who was ill, and received her visits gladly.

“For,” she said, “she’s a fine douce lass, and speyks to ye as gin ye war ither fowk, and no as gin she kent a’thing, and cam to tell ye the muckle half o’ ’t.”

I wonder how much her friends understood of what she read to them? She did not confine herself to the Bible, which indeed she was a little shy of reading except they wanted it, but read anything that pleased herself, never doubting that “ither fowk” could enjoy what she enjoyed. She even tried the *Paradise Lost* upon Mrs. Whaup, as she had tried it long ago upon Tibbie Dyster; and Mrs. Whaup never seemed tired of



listening to it. I daresay she understood about as much of it as poets do of the celestial harmonies ever toning around them.

And Peter Whaup was once known, when more than half drunk, to stop his swearing in mid-volley, simply because he had caught a glimpse of Annie at the other end of the street.

So the maiden grew in favour. Her beauty, both inward and outward, was that of the twilight, of a morning cloudy with high clouds, or of a silvery sea : it was a spiritual beauty for the most part. And her sorrow gave a quiet grace to her demeanour, peacefully ripening it into what is loveliest in ladyhood. She always looked like one waiting—sometimes like one listening, as she waited, to “melodies unheard.”

## CHAPTER XXVI.

ONE night, in the end of October, James Dow was walking by the side of his cart along a lonely road, through a peat-moss, on his way to the nearest sea-port for a load of coals. The moon was high and full. He was approaching a solitary milestone in the midst of the moss. It was the loneliest place. Low swells of peat-ground, the burial places of old forests, rolled away on every side, with, here and there, patches of the white-bearded canna-down, or cotton-grass, glimmering doubtfully as the Wind woke and turned himself on the wide space, where he found nothing to puff at but those same little old fairies sunning their hoary beards in the strange moon. As Dow drew near to the milestone he saw an odd-looking figure seated upon it. He was about to ask him if he would like a lift, when the figure rose, and cried joyfully,

“Jamie Doo!”

James Dow staggered back, and was nearly thrown down by the slow-rolling wheel; for the voice was Alec Forbes's. He gasped for breath, and felt as if he were recovering from a sudden stroke of paralysis, during which everything about him had passed away and a new order come in. All that he was capable of was to cry *wo!* to his horse.

There stood Alec, in rags, with a face thin but brown—healthy, bold, and firm. He looked ten years older standing there in the moonlight.

"The Lord preserve 's!" cried Dow, and could say no more.

"He has preserved me, ye see, Jeamie. Hoo 's my mother?"

"She 's brawly, brawly, Mr. Alec. The Lord preserve 's! She 's been terrible aboot ye. Ye maunna gang in upo' her. It wad kill her."

"I hae a grainy sense left, Jeamie. But I 'm awfu' tired. Ye maun jist turn yer cairt and tak' me hame. I 'll be worth a lade o' coal to my mither ony gait. An' syne ye can brak it till her."

Without another word, Dow turned his horse, helped Alec into the cart, covered him with his coat and some straw, and strode away beside, not knowing whether he was walking in a dream, or in a real starry night. Alec fell fast asleep,

and never waked till the cart stood still, about midnight, at his mother's door. He started up.

"Lie still, Mr. Alec," said Dow, in a whisper. "The mistress 'll be in her bed. And gin ye gang in upo' her that gait, ye 'll drive her daft."

Alec lay down again, and Dow went to Mary's window, on the other side, to try to wake her. But just as he returned, Alec heard his mother's window open.

"Who's there?" she called.

"Naebody but 'me, Jeamie Doo," answered James. "I was half-gaits to Portlokie, whan I had a mishap upo' the road. Bettie pat her fit upon a sharp stane, and fell doon, and bruik baith her legs."

"How did she come home then?"

"She bude to come hame, memi."

"Broke her legs!"

"Hoot, mem—her k-nees. I dinna mean the banes, ye ken, mem; only the skin. But she wasna fit to gang on. And sae I brocht her back."

"What's that i' the cairt? Is 't onything deid?"

"Na, mem, de'il a bit o' 't! It's livin' eneuch. It's a stranger lad that I gae a lift till upo' the road. He's fell tired."

But Dow's voice trembled, or—or something or

other revealed all to the mother's heart. She gave a great cry. Alec sprung from the cart, rushed into the house, and was in his mother's arms.

Annie was asleep in the next room, but she half awoke with a sense of his presence. She had heard his voice through the folds of sleep. And she thought she was lying on the rug before the dining-room fire, with Alec and his mother at the tea-table, as on that night when he brought her in from the snow-hut. Finding out confusedly that the supposition did not correspond with some other vague consciousness, she supposed next that she "had died in sleep, and was a blessed ghost," just going to find Alec in heaven. That was abandoned in its turn, and all at once she knew that she was in her own bed, and that Alec and his mother were talking in the next room.

She rose, but could hardly dress herself for trembling. When she was dressed, she sat down on the edge of the bed to bethink herself.

The joy was almost torture, but it had a certain qualifying bitter in it. Ever since she had believed him dead, Alec had been so near to her! She had loved him as much as ever she would. But Life had come in suddenly, and divided those whom Death had joined. Now he was a great way off; and she dared not speak to him whom she had cherished in her heart. Modesty took the

telescope from the hands of Lóve, and turning it, put the larger end to Annie's eye. Ever since her confession to Curly, she had been making fresh discoveries in her own heart; and now the tide of her love swelled so strong, that she felt it must break out in an agony of joy, and betray her, if once she looked in the face of Alec alive from the dead. Nor was this all. What she had done about his mother's debt, must come out soon; and although Alec could not think that she meant to lay him under obligation, he might yet feel under obligation, and that she could not bear. These things and many more so worked in the sensitive maiden, that as soon as she heard Alec and his mother go to the dining-room, she put on her bonnet and cloak, stole like a thief through the house to the back door, and let herself out into the night.

She avoided the path, and went through the hedge into a field of stubble at the back of the house, across which she made her way to the turn-pike road, and the new bridge over the Glamour. Often she turned to look back to the window of the room where he that had been dead was alive and talking with his widowed mother; and only when the intervening trees hid it from her sight did she begin to think what she should do. She could think of nothing but to go to her aunt once more,

and ask her to takè her in for a few days. So she walked on through the sleeping town.

Not a soul was awake, and the stillness was awful. It was a place of tombs. And those tombs were haunted by dreams. Away towards the west, the moon lay on the steep-sloping edge of a rugged cloud, appearing to have rolled half-way down from its lofty peak, and about to be launched off its baseless bulk into

“the empty, vast, and wandering air.”

In the middle of the large square of the little gray town she stood and looked around her. All one side lay in shade; the greater part of the other three lay in moonlight. The old growth of centuries, gables and fronts—stepping out into the light, retreating into the shadow—outside stairs, and dark gateways, stood up in the night warding a townful of sleepers. Not one would be awake now. Ah yes! there was light in the wool-carder’s window. His wife was dying. That light over the dying, wiped the death-look from the face of the sleeping town. Annie roused herself and passed on, fearing to be seen. It was the only thing to be afraid of. But the stillness was awful. One silence only could be more awful: the same silence at noon-day.

So she passed into the western road and through the trees to the bridge over the Wan Water. They



stood so still in the moonlight ! And the smell from the withering fields, laid bare of the harvest and breathing out their damp odours, came to her mixed with the chill air from the dark hills around, already spiced with keen atoms of frost, soon to appear in spangly spikes. Beneath the bridge the river flowed maunderingly, blundering out unintelligible news of its parent bog and all the dreary places it had come through on its way to the strath of Glamerton, which nobody listened to but one glad-hearted, puzzle-brained girl, who stood looking down into it from the bridge when she ought to have been in bed and asleep. She was not far from Clippenstrae, but she could not go there so early, for her aunt would be frightened first and angry next. So she wandered up the stream to the old church-forsaken churchyard, and sat on one of the tomb-stones. It became very cold as the morning drew on. The moon went down ; the stars grew dim ; the river ran with a livelier murmur ; and through all the fine gradations of dawn—cloudy wind and grey sky—the gates of orange and red burst open, and the sun came forth rejoicing. The long night was over. It had not been a very weary one ; for Annie had thoughts of her own, and like the earth in the warm summer nights, could shine and flash up through the dark, seeking the face of God in

the altar-flame of prayer. Yet she was glad when the sun came. With the first bubble of the spring of light bursting out on the hill-top, she rose, and walked through the long shadows of the graves down to the river, and through the long shadows of the stubble down the side of the river, which shone in the morning light like a flowing crystal of delicate brown—and so to Clippenstrae, where she found her aunt still in her night-cap. She was standing at the door, however, shading her eyes with her hand, looking abroad as if for some one that might be crossing hitherward from the east. She did not see Annie approaching from the north.

“What are ye luikin’ for, auntie?”

“Naething. Nae for you, ony gait, lassie.”

“Weel, ye see, I’m come ohn luikit for. But ye was luikin’ for somebody, auntie.”

“Na. I was only jist luikin’.”

Even Annie did not then know that it was the soul’s hunger, the vague sense of a need which nothing but the God of human faces, the God of the morning and of the starful night, the God of love and self-forgetfulness, can satisfy, that sent her money-loving, poverty-stricken, pining, grumbling old aunt out staring towards the east. It is this formless idea of something at hand that keeps men and women striving to tear from the bosom

of the world the secret of their own hopes. How little they know that what they look for in reality is their God! This is that for which their heart and their flesh cry out.

Lead, lead me on, my Hopes. I know that ye are true and not vain. Vanish from my eyes day after day, but arise in new forms. I will follow your holy deception;—follow till ye have brought me to the feet of my Father in Heaven, where I shall find you all with folded wings spangling the sapphire dusk whereon stands His throne, which is our home.

“What do ye want sae ear’s this, Annie Anderson?”

Margaret’s first thought was always—“What can the body be wantin’?”

“I want ye to tak’ me in for a while,” answered Annie.

“For an hoör or twa? Ow ay.”

“Na. For a week or twa maybe.”

“’Deed no. I’ll do naething o’ the kin’. Lat them ’at made ye prood, keep ye prood.”

“I’m nae prood, auntie. What gars ye say that?”

“Sae prood ’at ye wadna tak’ a gude offer whan it was i’ yer pooer. And syne they turn ye oot whan it shuits themsels. Gentle fowks is sair misca’d (*misnamed*). I’m no gaein’ to tak’ ye in.

There's Dawvid Gordon wants a lass. Ye can jist gang till a place like ither fowk."

"I'll gang and luik efter 't direckly. Hoo far is 't, Auntie?"

"Gaein' and giein' awa' yer siller to beggars as gin 't war stew (*dust*), jist to be a gran' lady! Ye 're nane sae gran' *I* can tell ye. An' syne comin' to puir fowk like me to tak' ye in for a week or twa! Weel I wat!"

Auntie had been listening to evil tongues—so much easier to listen to than just tongues. With difficulty Annie kept back her tears. She made no defence; tried to eat the porridge which her aunt set before her; and departed. Before three hours were over, she had the charge of the dairy and cooking at Willowcraig for the next six months of coming winter and spring. Protected from suspicion, her spirits rose all the cheerier for their temporary depression, and she went singing about the house like a *lintie*.

As she did not appear at breakfast, and was absent from the dinner-table as well, Mrs. Forbes set out with Alec to inquire after her, and not knowing where else to go first, betook herself to Robert Bruce. He showed more surprise than pleasure at seeing Alec, smiling with his own acridness as he said,

"I doobt ye haena brocht hame that barrel o' ile

ye promised me, Mr. Alec? It wad hae cleared aff a guid sheave o' yer mither's debts."

Alec answered cheerily, although his face flushed,  
"All in good time, I hope, Mr. Bruce. I 'm obliged to you for your forbearance, though."

He was too solemn-glad to be angry.

"It canna laist for ever, ye ken," rejoined Bruce, happy to be able to bite, although his poison-bag was gone.

Alec made no reply.

"Have you seen Annie Anderson to-day, Mr. Bruce?" asked his mother.

"'Deed no, mem. She doesna aften trouble huz wi' her company. We 're no gran' eneuch for her."

"Hasn't she been here to-day?" repeated Mrs. Forbes, with discomposure in her look and tone.

"Hae ye tint her, mem?" rejoined Bruce.  
"That is a peety. She 'll be awa' wi' that vaigabone, Willie Macwha. He was i' the toon last nicht. I saw him gang by wi' Baubie Peterson."

They made him no reply, understanding well enough that though the one premise might be true, the conclusion must be as false as it was illogical and spiteful. They did not go to George Macwha's, but set out for Clippenstrae. When they reached the cottage, they found Meg's nose in full vigour.

"Na. She 's no here. What for sud she be

here? She has no claim upo' me, although it pleases you to turn her oot—after bringin' her up to notions that hae jist ruined her wi' pride."

"Indeed I didn't turn her out, Miss Anderson."

"Weel, ye sud never hae taen her in."

There was something in her manner which made them certain she knew where Annie was; but as she avoided every attempt to draw her into the admission, they departed foiled, although relieved. She knew well enough that Annie's refuge could not long remain concealed, but she found it pleasant to annoy Mrs. Forbes.

And not many days passed before Mrs. Forbes did learn where Annie was. But she was so taken up with her son, that weeks even passed before that part of her nature which needed a daughter's love began to assert itself again, and turn longingly towards her all but adopted child.

Alec went away once more to the great town. He had certain remnants of study to gather up at the university, and a certain experience to go through in the preparation of drugs, without which he could not obtain his surgeon's diploma. The good harvest would by and by put a little money in his mother's hands, and the sooner he was ready to practise the better. —

The very day after he went, Mrs. Forbes drove to Willowcraig to see Annie. She found

her short-coated and short-wrappereed, like any other girl at a farmhouse. Annie was rather embarrassed at the sight of her friend. Mrs. Forbes could easily see, however, that there was no breach in her affection towards her. Yet it must be confessed that having regard to the final return of her son, she was quite as well pleased to know that she was bound to remain where she was for some time to come.

She found the winter very dreary without her, though.



## CHAPTER XXVII.

FINDING herself in good quarters, Annie re-engaged herself at the end of the half-year. She had spent the winter in house-work, combined with the feeding of pigs and poultry, and partial ministrations to the wants of the cows, of which she had milked the few continuing to give milk upon turnips and straw, and made the best of their scanty supply for the use of the household. There was no hardship in her present life. She had plenty of wholesome food to eat, and she lay warm at night. The old farmer, who was rather overbearing with his men, was kind to her because he liked her; and the guidwife was a sonsy (*well-conditioned*) dame, who, when she scolded, never meant anything by it.

She cherished her love lor Alec, but was quite peaceful as to the future. How she might have

felt had she heard that he was going to be married, I cannot take upon me to say.

When her work was done, she would go out for a lonely walk, without asking leave or giving offence, indulging in the same lawlessness as before, and seeming incapable of being restrained by other bonds than those of duty.

And now the month of April was nearly over, and the primroses were *glintin'* on the braes.

One evening she went out bare-headed to look how a certain den, wont to be haunted by wild-flowers and singing-birds, was getting on towards its complement of summer pleasures. As she was climbing over a fence, a horseman came round the corner of the road. She saw at a glance that it was Alec, and got down again.

Change had passed upon both since they parted. He was a full-grown man with a settled look. She was a lovely woman, even more delicate and graceful than her childhood had promised.

As she got down from the fence, he got down from his horse. Without a word on either side, their hands joined, and still they stood silent for a minute, Annie with her eyes on the ground, Alec gazing in her face, which was pale with more than its usual paleness.

"I saw Curly yesterday," said Alec at length, with what seemed to Annie a meaning look.

Her face flushed as red as fire.—Could Curly have betrayed her?

She managed to stammer out,

“Oh! Did you?”

And then silence fell again.

“Eh! Alec,” she said at length, taking up the conversation in her turn, “we thought we would never see ye again.”

“I thought so too,” answered Alec, “when the great berg came down on us through the snow-storm, and flung the barque upon the floe with her side crushed in.—How I used to dream about the old school-days, Annie, and finding you in my hut!—And I did find you in the snow, Annie.”

But a figure came round the other corner—for the road made a double sweep at this point—and cried—

“Annie, come hame directly. Ye’re wantit.”

“I’m coming to see you again soon, Annie,” said Alec. “But I must go away for a month or two first.”

Annie replied with a smile and an outstretched hand—nothing more. She could wait well enough.

How lovely the flowers in the dyke-sides looked as she followed Mrs. Gordon home! But the thought that perhaps Curly had told him something was like the serpent under them. Yet somehow she had got so beautiful before she reached

the house, that her aunt, who had come to see her, called out,

“Losh ! lassie ! What hae ye been aboot ? Ye hae a colour by ordinar’.”

“That’s easy accoontet for,” said her mistress roguishly. “She was stan’in’ killoguin wi’ a bonnie young lad an’ a horse. I winna hae sic doin’s about my hoose, I can tell ye, lass.”

Margaret Anderson flew into a passion, and abused her with many words, which Annie, so far from resenting, scarcely even heard. At length she ceased, and departed almost without an adieu. But what did it matter ?—What did any earthly thing matter, if only Curly had not told him ?

Now, all that Curly had told Alec was that Annie was not engaged to him.

So the days and nights passed, and Spring, the girl, changed into Summer, the woman ; and still Alec did not come.

One evening, when a wind that blew from the west, and seemed to smell of the roses of the sunset, was filling her rosy heart with joy—Annie sat in a rough little seat, scarcely an arbour, at the bottom of a garden of the true country order, where all the dear old-fashioned glories of sweet-peas, cabbage-roses, larkspur, gardener’s garters, honesty, poppies, and peonies, grew in homely companionship with gooseberry and currant bushes,

with potatoes and pease. The scent of the sunset came in reality from a *cheval de frise* of wallflower on the coping of the low stone wall behind where she was sitting with her Milton. She read aloud in a low voice that sonnet beginning "*Lady that in the prime of earliest youth.*" As she finished it, a voice, as low, said, almost in her ear,

"That 's you, Annie."

Alec was looking over the garden wall behind her.

"Eh! Alec," she cried, starting to her feet, at once shocked and delighted, "dinna say that. It's dreidfu' to hear ye say sic a thing. I wish I was a wee like her."

"Weel, Annie, I think ye 're jist like her. But come oot wi' me. I hae a story to tell ye. Gie me yer han', and pit yer fit upo' the seat."

She was over the wall in a moment, and they were soon seated under the trees of the copse near which Annie had met him before. The brown twilight was coming on, and a warm sleepy hush pervaded earth and air, broken only by the stream below them, cantering away over its stones to join the Wan Water. Neither of them was inclined to quarrel with the treeless country about them: they were lapped in foliage; nor with the desolate moorland hills around them: they only drove them closer together.

Time unmeasured by either passed without speech.

"They tell't me," said Alec at length, "that you and Curly had made it up."

"Alec!" exclaimed Annie, and looked up in his face as if he had accused her of infidelity, but, instantly dropping her eyes, said no more.

"I wad hae fun' ye oot afore a day was ower, gin it hadna been for that."

Annie's heart beat violently, but she said nothing, and, after a silence, Alec went on.

"Did my mother ever tell ye about how the barque was lost?"

"No, Alec."

"It was a terrible snow-storm with wind. We couldn't see more than a few yards a-head. We were under bare poles, but we couldn't keep from drifting. All in a moment a huge ghastly thing came out of the gloamin' to windward, bore down on us like a spectre, and dashed us on a floating field of ice. The barque was thrown right upon it with one side stove in; but nobody was killed. It was an awful night, Annie; but I'm not going to tell you about it now. We made a rough sledge, and loaded it with provisions, and set out westward, and were carried westward at the same time on the floe, till we came near land. Then we launched our boat and got to the shore of Green-

land. There we set out travelling southwards. Many of our men died, do what I could to keep them alive. But I'll tell you all about it another time, if you'll let me. What I want to tell you noo's this.—Ilka nicht, as sure as I lay doon i' the snaw to sleep, I dreamed I was at hame. A' the auld stories cam' back. I woke ance, thinkin' I was carryin' you throu' the water i' the lobby o' the schuil, and that ye was greitin' upo' my face. And whan I woke, my face was weet. I doobt I had been greitin' mysel'. A' the auld faces cam' roon' me ilka nicht, Thomas Crann and Jeames Dow and my mother—whiles ane and whiles anither—but ye was aye there.

“Ae mornin', whan I woke up, I was my lane. I dinna ken richtly hoo it had happened. I think the men war nigh-han' dazed wi' the terrible cauld and the weariness o' the traivel, and I had sleepit ower lang, and they had forgotten a' aboot me. And what think ye was the first thocht i' my heid, whan I cam' to mysel', i' the terrible white desolation o' cauld and ice and snaw? I wantit to run straucht to you, and lay my heid upo' yer shouter. For I had been dreamin' a' nicht that I was lyin' i' my bed at hame, terrible ill, and ye war gaein aboot the room like an angel, wi' the glimmer o' white wings aboot ye, which I reckon was the snaw comin' throu' my dream. And ye wad never



come near me; and I cudna speak to cry to ye to come; till at last, whan my hert was like to brak 'cause ye wadna luik at me, ye turned wi' tears i' yer een, and cam' to the bedside and leaned ower me, and——”

Here Alec's voice failed him.

“Sae ye see it was nae wonner that I wantit you, whan I fand mysel' a' my lane i' the dreidfu' place, the very beauty o' which was deidly.

“Weel, that wasna a'. I got mair that day than I thocht ever to get. Annie, I think what Thomas Crann used to say maun be true. Annie, I think a body may some day get a kin' o' a sicht o' the face o' God.—I was sae dooncast, whan I saw mysel' left ahin', that I sat doon upon a rock and glowered at naething. It was awfu'. An' it grew waur and waur, till the only comfort I had was that I cudna live lang. And wi' that the thocht o' God cam' into my heid, and it seemed as gin I had a richt, as it war, to call upon him—I was sae miserable.

“And there cam' ower me a quaietness, and like a warm breath o' spring air. I dinna ken what it was—but it set me upo' my feet, and I startit to follow the lave. Snaw had fa'en, sae that I could hardly see the track. And I never cam' up wi' them, and I haena heard o' them sin' syne.

“The silence at first had been fearfu'; but noo,

somehoo or ither, I canna richtly explain 't, the silence seemed to be God himsel' a' about me.

"And I'll never forget him again, Annie.

"I cam' upo' tracks, but no o' oor ain men. They war the fowk o' the country. And they brocht me whaur there was a schooner lyin' ready to gang to Archangel. And here I am."

Was there ever a gladder heart than Annie's? She was weeping as if her life would flow away in tears. She had known that Alec would come back to God some day.

He ceased speaking, but she could not cease weeping. If she had tried to stop the tears, she would have been torn with sobs. They sat silent for a long time. At length Alec spoke again:

"Annie, I don't deserve it—but *will* you be my wife some day?"

And all the answer Annie made was to lay her head on his bosom and weep on.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

IS it worth while, I debate with myself, to write one word more?—Shall I tie the ends of my warp, or leave them loose?—I will tie them, but no one needs sit out the process.

The farm of Howglen prospered. Alice never practised in his profession, but became a first-rate farmer. Within two years Annie and he were married, and began a new chapter of their history.

When Mrs. Forbes found that Alec and Annie were engaged, she discovered that she had been in reality wishing it for a long time, and that the opposing sense of duty had been worldly.

Mr. Cupples came to see them every summer, and generally remained over the harvest. He never married. But he wrote a good book.

Thomas Crann and he had many long disputes, and did each other good. Thomas grew gentler

as he grew older. And he learned to hope more for other people. And then he hoped more for himself too.

The first time Curly saw Annie after the wedding, he was amazed at his own presumption in ever thinking of marrying such a lady. When about thirty, by which time he had a good business of his own, he married Isie Constable—still little, still old-fashioned, and still wise.

Margaret Anderson was taken good care of by Annie Forbes, but kept herself clear of all obligation by never acknowledging any.

Robert Bruce had to refund, and content himself with his rights. He died worth a good deal of money notwithstanding, which must have been a great comfort to him at the last.

Young Robert is a clergyman, has married a rich wife, hopes to be Moderator of the Assembly some day, and never alludes to his royal ancestor.

THE END.



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